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SOME PRINCIPLES OF ELIZABETHAN STAGING

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS
AND LITERATURE IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE
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(DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH)

BY

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To Professor A. H. Tolman, who first interested me in this subject, and to Professors F. I. Carpenter and J. M. Manly who have assisted untiringly by suggestion, guidance, and the loan of books, I desire to express thanks and deep obligation. Without their kindly assistance, this study, small as it is, could never have been undertaken nor completed.



SOME PRINCIPLES OF ELIZABETHAN STAGING.¹

PART I.

THERE is perhaps no subject connected with Shakespeare on which there is more uncertainty of opinion than on the actual staging of his plays. No one any longer doubts that the public stage consisted of three important parts: a front, uninclosed platform; a rear stage, separated from the front by a curtain; and a balcony or upper stage. A growing feeling exists also that the stage was fairly well-furnished with properties. But the exact relation of one part to another, the precise list of furnishings, and, more important than either of these, the actual customs and methods of play-production, yet remain to be determined. Given such a triple stage, how were plays performed which consisted of a large number of short, rapidly changing scenes, and which demanded, and often were clearly furnished with, numerous and sometimes heavy properties? They could not have been staged according to modern methods, with a complete and harmonious background for each scene. What, then, was the method or methods by which these plays were produced?

Practically but one answer has been given—that of Kilian,

¹This study is only part of a more comprehensive one now in preparation, discussing not only the staging of the Elizabethan plays, but also the actual construction of the stage itself and the properties which furnished it. Most of the opinions advanced here were formulated three years ago, but the publication of BRODMEIER'S *Die Shakespeare Bühne* in 1904 has made necessary the reconsideration of the alternation theory in the more reasonable form in which he presents it. I have attempted, however, neither to answer nor to review his valuable contribution, leaving many interesting points in his dissertation quite unnoticed.

The two pictures of theater interiors reproduced are from photographs of the originals in the British Museum. The Roxana picture has been many times reprinted, but not, I believe, with the whole title-page. The Messallina picture has never before been published, and seems practically unknown to writers upon the stage. My attention was called to it by a note by William Rendle, *Notes and Queries*, 7th Ser., Vol. VI, p. 221. It closely resembles the Roxana picture, both agreeing in showing the railing, the hexagonal(?) stage, and the window-like balcony. The Messallina picture is valuable, however, for its figured stage curtain, its balcony curtain, and its peculiar projecting tiring-house.

All references in the following pages are, I think, self-explanatory. Perhaps it should be noted that the dates and the names of theatrical companies or theaters given after the names of the plays are those upon the earliest title-pages. Where it has seemed advantageous I have also given the date of composition, usually following Ward or Fleay, though not necessarily accepting their conclusions as final.

Genée, etc., in the *Shakespeare Jahrbuch*;¹ of Brandl, in the Introduction to the new Schlegel-Tieck Shakespeare; and of Brodmeier, in his recently published dissertation, *Die Shakespeare Bühne nach den alten Bühnenanweisungen*² (Weimar, 1904). These writers assume the triple stage; suppose most, if not all, of the properties to have been placed on the rear stage, and by the use of a few of Shakespeare's plays, Brodmeier alone taking account of all, attempt to establish what one may call an alternation staging; that is, that the plays were so constructed that no two differently set scenes on the rear stage ever came directly in succession, but that front and rear stage were used alternately, the rear stage being arranged while the front stage was in use.

It is not quite true to say that this is the only method of stage management yet suggested, for early plays, like *Nice Wanton* (1560) and *Jocasta* (1566), obviously were written for no such system. Most of the earlier dramas frankly avoid all properties. *Nice Wanton* requires nothing in the way of setting, and the scene is practically the stage itself. *Jocasta* is more elaborate, for it requires a house front at either side of the stage; but, built upon classical models, it has but one scene, the place of action never changing. So complex a play as *The Contention of Liberty and Prodigality* (1602), with its "homely bower" for Virtue and its "palace" for Fortune, recurring throughout the play, suggests a similar classic staging, but rather more highly elaborated. Most Elizabethan plays, however, cannot be staged at all according to the classical method, or according to the simple method of the early plays, though some, in their numerous unlocated scenes, do suggest the latter. The alternation theory therefore remains the only one yet suggested at all applicable to most plays.

It is, however, as presented by its advocates up to this time, extremely unsatisfactory. German students seem to have accepted

¹ See, especially, GENEÉ, "Ueber die scenischen Formen Shakespeare's in ihren Verhältnisz zur Bühne seiner Zeit," *Jahrbuch*, Vol. XXVI; KILIAN, "Die scenischen Formen Shakespeare's," *ibid.*, Vol. XXVIII; KILIAN, "Shakespeare auf der modernen Bühne," *ibid.*, Vol. XXXVI. See also, for a short summary of the alternation theory, A. H. TOLMAN's *Introduction to Julius Cæsar*, in the "Star Series of English Classics."

² Brodmeier adds a fourth stage, the space discovered when the stage doors were opened. Everybody admits that this was sometimes used in the plays, but hardly with the frequency he supposes.



THE
TRAGEDY
of
MESSALLINA
by
N. RICHARDS.
London printed
for
D. W. Frowde.
1840



ROXANA
TRAGÆDIA
A plagiarij
Vnguibus
Vindicata,
aucta, et
agnita ab
authore
Gulielmo
Alabastro.





it unhesitatingly and reason from it as if it were thoroughly established. On the contrary, it rests on a singularly limited study, and that of inconclusive sources; it assumes as certain and universal an unproved reconstruction of the Elizabethan theater; it is supported by principles and tests which contradict one another; and it disregards entirely several plays which it cannot easily explain. It has been advanced as a dominating factor in play-construction, but it is doubtful whether it ever influenced, in any very pronounced or vital way, any Elizabethan dramatist. To show the grounds for these objections is the purpose of the first part of this study.

In the first place, Shakespeare's plays, to which alternationists have practically confined themselves, are far less complete in specific directions than those of other authors—Greene or Heywood, for example. *The Wonder of Women* (1606), one of the richest of plays in directions of value, has a note to its epilogue which says: "After all, let me intreat my Reader not to taxe me for the fashion of the Entrances and Musique of this tragedy, for know it is printed only as it was presented by youths, and after the fashion of the private stage." If we had Shakespeare's plays in a similarly complete form, we might find that our present theories needed to be largely changed. As it is, it is not safe to trust solely to the directions of his plays; for questions of staging, many other plays are more valuable. In the second place, the plays of Shakespeare range in date over a long period of years, and were given at several theaters. Presumably the stage customs and furnishings changed from time to time and varied in different theaters. Instead of confining himself to one author, the student should examine all the plays performed either at one theater or in one period. In questions of stage construction and use of properties the study by theaters will yield the most satisfactory results, since the several theaters may have varied in these particulars; but dramatic customs are a matter more of long periods and general usage—slowly arising and slowly decaying, but prevailing pretty generally while they do prevail. There are a few plays, like *Sir Thomas More* (ca. 1590), *The Massacre of Paris* (1596?), or *Faustus* (1604), so cut, interpolated, or disarranged

that it is useless to attempt to form theories which will explain them. Others, like *The Taming of the Shrew* (1623), not published until long after their first composition, may represent in their directions such varied conditions of stage custom that they are of little value for any one period. But, aside from these, one must include in his investigation all the plays of a given period, finding some theory or group of theories which will explain them consistently and completely.¹

But quite as important as a wide and comprehensive reading of the plays of a period is the consideration of each play as a whole. If theories of stage management are to be valuable at all, they must apply to whole plays and not merely to scattered acts or scenes. Strangely enough, few of the alternationists seem to have recognized this principle, or at least to have reckoned with it. Brodmeier, whose very purpose is to explain the staging of Shakespeare's plays, presents only a study of scenes. Perhaps one could make from his scattered hints a consistent staging of each individual play, but he certainly has not shown his reader the way to it. It is true that there is some reason for this. It is a relatively simple matter to find a few scenes in succession which will show a possible alternation in the use of the front and back stage, but to find a whole play arranged on that or any other

¹ In this study I have examined practically every extant play accessible to students, published between 1559 and 1603. I have also included all plays published later which probably were produced during that period. Plays produced at court or under court influence, like *Old Fortunatus*, have been included and used as illustrations in spite of that fact; for, however the court plays differed in furnishings or form of stage, in dramatic conventions they probably did not vary widely from the usual custom. The reason for choosing 1603 is that it not only marked the end of the Elizabethan drama, precisely speaking, but that it also was a time around which cluster other important dramatic events. The erection of the Globe (1599) and *Fortune* (1599); the resumption of playing by the children of Paul's and the children of the Revels, which also happened not long before this—all mark it as a turning-point in the drama. The difficulty of assigning plays of this period to the theater in which they were produced is so great that study by theaters is hazardous and comparatively valueless. In the Jacobean period, however, I believe it will be possible to follow this method with profit. From a lack of this knowledge of the exact stage construction, I have drawn very little from Shakespeare; the staging of his plays can be satisfactorily explained only when the construction of the Globe and Blackfriars is more exactly determined. I have throughout used the best modern editions of the plays—best in that they preserve the original stage directions. Most of the directions of importance have been collated with the originals in the British Museum. Bullen's editions, which I have had occasion to use more than those of other editors, seem substantially correct, except that of Marlowe, which varies so widely in its directions from the original quartos that I have used few illustrations from his plays. These plays, however, present no evidence contradictory to my conclusions, but rather decidedly support them.

principle is difficult. To be of value as evidence, a play must contain so many directions or unmistakable textual hints indicating the use of properties or some specific part of the stage, that practically every scene is definitely located. This, however, very few plays do; most of them, so far as any indicated arrangement is concerned, are quite inconclusive. Mention of the use of a curtain, the only obvious test of a rear stage scene, is comparatively rare, and even this, in very many cases, can be interpreted as referring to a bed curtain.¹ In order to prove alternation even between scattered groups of scenes, its advocates have been compelled to formulate certain principles of stage custom and tests of rear-stage scenes, holding that in plays so apparently deficient in directions, such assumptions of the use of the curtain, where it is not specifically mentioned, are justifiable.

The principles upon which the whole theory rests may be summarized as follows: the performance of an Elizabethan play was continuous;² in consequence of this, two rear-stage scenes with different settings could not come in direct succession,³ since their rearrangement would cause a pause in the action; all properties were confined to the rear stage. These principles, though not definitely stated by all the writers, obviously must be assumed to be the basis of their argument, or there is no need of alternation. The tests of rear-stage scenes, by which these principles have been applied to the plays, have not been widely illustrated by anybody but Brodmeier. His principal tests of rear stage or

¹In *Golden Age* (1611, Red Bull), Act IV, "curtain" can scarcely mean anything else than "bed-curtain." The scene has been in the outer room of a castle. Danaë, talking to Jupiter disguised as a peddler, says (p. 66): "Yon is my doore, Dare not to enter there. I will to rest." Jupiter obtains permission to sleep in this outer room. As soon as Danaë and her four watchful beldams are gone, he throws off his disguise, saying: "Yon bright Queene I'll now court like a King." Exit. But instead of his going in to her comes this direction: "Enter the foure old Beldames drawing out Danaë's bed; she in it. They place foure tapers at the foure corners," and withdraw. Jupiter re-enters, "crown'd with his Imperial Robes," for which he obviously went out, puts out the lights, and Danaë says: "Before you come to bed, the curtaines draw" (p. 69). At the end of this part of the scene "the bed is drawne in," Jupiter's clownish companion enters, and the scene is again the outer room. If this curtain were the stage curtain, the bed would hardly have been so drawn out and in. But generally when a curtain or curtains (I can distinguish no difference in the use of these terms) is alluded to, the stage curtain was probably meant. Almost every important theater had a curtain and would be likely to use it for concealing the bringing in of a bed, if for anything. Each direction has to be interpreted, therefore, in the light of its context.

²KILIAN, *Jahrbuch*, Vol. XXXVI, p. 235.

³*Ibid.*, and BRANDL, "Introduction," p. 31.

⁴BRODMEIER, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

in scenes are: discovery by means of a curtain—though small discovered scenes like the *Tempest*, Act V, where Prospero “discovers Ferdinand and Miranda, playing at Chesse” (p. 64), he places in his fourth stage; the use of properties; the use of the doors; the use of the balcony; the use of arras. Kilian¹ classes as *in* scenes all the Belmont scenes in the *Merchant of Venice*, presumably because they are largely *room* scenes; and² considers any scene as played on the rear stage in which a character dies and there is no hint in directions or text of a removal of the body. Most alternationists, indeed, tend to put almost any located scene on the rear stage. But since a clash—that is, the occurrence of two *in* scenes in direct succession—is fatal to the theory, its whole purpose being to avoid breaks and pauses in the action, scenes before and after these *in* scenes must be *out* scenes. Most scenes in some way or other, however, are located, and a large number use doors or balconies or properties, so that usually only short, relatively unimportant scenes remain to be classed as *out*. This, in turn, leads to a greater emphasis than ever on the rear stage, and to classifying as *out* any short scenes of which the purpose is obscure. At once a purpose easily suggests itself for such scenes—they fill the time while the rear stage is being prepared. This is the final result of the theory: authors, in order to secure this alternation, had so to construct their plays that no two *in* scenes should occur together, and actually composed short “carpenter” scenes for this purpose.³ Alternation becomes therefore a factor in play-construction—it sums up the influence upon the playwright of his theatrical environment. By applying these tests to Shakespeare’s plays, a large number of examples have been secured to prove and substantiate the theory. But examples gathered in this way are practically valueless, for they rest for their validity upon the tests; and the tests, so far as I am aware, no one has taken the trouble to prove, though each is open to serious question, if not to absolute denial.

For example, the statement that use of doors or balcony indi-

¹ *Loc. cit.*, p. 235.

² *Ibid.*, p. 240.

³ So KILIAN, *loc. cit.*, p. 236: “Eine ganze Reihe von Scenen dankt ihr Dasein nicht einem künstlerischen Bedürfnis, sondern lediglich einem äusseren technischen Umstande, der sich aus dem primitiven Bühnengerüste jener Zeit ergab.”

cates a rear stage scene depends entirely upon one's reconstruction of an Elizabethan stage. Brodmeier's—and he is only following Brandl¹—is based on the familiar picture of the Swan Theater, to which the important addition is made of a curtain between the pillars. Yet even the reliability of the original picture without this imagined addition has been attacked and its value as an authority for the Elizabethan playhouse seriously questioned. Lawrence² insists that it is merely "hearsay evidence," being the drawing of Arend van Buchell, who never visited England, from the instruction of DeWitt, an observer so inaccurate that his description of the theater is wrong both as to the size and its materials. Moreover, the picture, Lawrence claims, is self-contradictory, showing a movable stage supporting fixed columns, and he therefore doubts its value as evidence concerning even the Swan Theater. It is not necessary to go as far as this, perhaps, but he is certainly right in uttering his "stern note of protest" against accepting the picture as a fair representation of a typical Elizabethan stage. For one thing, though he does not notice this, it shows but two doors, and many of the old theaters had three;³ and, for another, it not only shows no curtain, but also no

¹ Loc. cit., p. 27.

² *Englische Studien*, Vol. XXXII, Part I, p. 46.

³ The generally received opinion that there were but two doors leading from the stage to the dressing rooms is founded, no doubt, upon the Swan picture and the very common direction "Enter at one door . . . ; enter at the other door . . ." The directions, however, use this phrase, "the other," very loosely, as is clear from the directions from *Maid's Metamorphosis* given below. The following directions prove the existence of three doors. Besides the *Misfortunes of Arthur* (1587) and *Jocasta* (1566), the directions of which plainly require three entrances, the following may be noted: In the "plat" of the *Seven Deadly Sins* (Fleay dates 1585) occurs: "Enter queue with 2 counsailors, Mr. Brian Tho. Goodale. to them Ferrex and Porrex several waies with drums and powers. Gorboduk entering in the midst between." Prologue to the *Four Prentices of London* (Red Bull, 1615, but acted according to Ward, 1603): "Enter three in blacke clokes, at three doores." *Maid's Metamorphosis* (1600, Paul's) p. 137: "Enter Ioculo, Frisco, and Mopso, at three severall doores;" yet only a dozen pages before we read, "Enter at one doore Mopso singing. . . . Enter at the other door Frisco singing; . . . Enter Ioculo in the midst singing." Plainly "other" is not very precisely used. In like manner, *Antonio's Revenge* (1602, Paul's), V, has: "Enter at one door Castilio and Forobosco. . . . All these go softly over the stage, whilst at the other door enters the ghost of Andrugio, who passeth by them." But in PERCY's *Faery Pastoral* (written also for Paul's, about 1601), IV, 6, occurs the direction: "They entered at severall doores Learchus at the midde doore." *The Travels of Three English Brothers* (1607, Queen's), p. 90: "Enter three severall waies the three Brothers." Other illustrations are *Eastward Ho* (1605, Blackfriars) I, 1; *Fair Em* (1631, but acted, according to Fleay, ca. 1590), I, 4; *Nobody and Somebody* (1606, Queen's), II, 1321-31; *Histrionastix* (1610, but acted ca. 1599), V, 103; *Epicoene* (1609), IV; *Covent Garden* (1632, Cockpit), V, 1, and *English Traveller* (1633, Queen's, Cockpit), IV, 3. It seems fairly certain, therefore, that, at some time in their history, the Blackfriars, Paul's, Cockpit, and Red Bull Theaters had three stage doors; and if the Blackfriars, perhaps the Globe (because

reasonable place to suppose one. Brodmeier appreciates, in some degree at least, the difficulty of hanging a curtain on the Swan stage, but persuades himself that it could have hung between the pillars, trying to prove (p. 43) that the space between the pillars and tiring-house was inclosed. Perhaps this space could have been closed, rather by movable curtains than in some permanent way, as he supposes, but that is only part of the difficulty. A curtain hanging from the "heavens" would be difficult to manage and would hide the balcony, rendering its curtain useless.¹ If we can judge at all from the proportions of the picture, a short curtain would not conceal the rear stage from the upper galleries, and would hide the balcony from the spectators in the yard and lower boxes. The more one attempts to hang a curtain between the Swan pillars, the more difficulties he will discover. The Swan picture therefore, lacking curtain, lacking three doors, is not a typical theater. It is only adding to confusion longer so to consider it.

Perhaps there was no typical theater; it would be strange if all the London playhouses had been alike. Two, and perhaps three, arrangements are entirely conceivable: Brandl and Brodmeier's, in which the curtain hides both the balcony and the

theaters at which the same plays were given could scarcely differ in so important a particular; and if the Globe, then the Fortune (since they were built alike, except in specified details). BRODMEIER, in attempting to prove that there were side entrances to the stage, notes the following instances in Shakespeare which certainly point to three doors: (p. 50) *Antony and Cleopatra*, III, 10; (p. 44) *John*, II, 1; (pp. 49, 50) *Macbeth*, II, 1; (p. 54) *Merry Wives of Windsor*, V, 5. The recognition of three doors leaves his argument for side entrances singularly weak. They may have existed, but are unproved. Side walls on his rear stage are very improbable, and the only argument for side entrances remaining, after three doors in the rear are supposed, is that of inconsistency. So in *Henry V* (1600), III, 1-3, because Henry enters to storm Harfleur, the doors representing the gates of the town, and the balcony, its walls, BRODMEIER (p. 45) thinks it impossible that Henry, supposed to be coming from some place outside the city, should have entered through another door, cut through the same wall. In view of other inconsistencies of the stage, and of the innumerable scenes in which the doors represent at the same time different places (e. g., the general directions to PERCY'S *Cuckqueens' and Cuckolds' Errants* (MSS dated 1601, Paul's), this objection is of little weight. Moreover, the following example shows specifically that it is unsupported by the plays: *Four Prentices of London* (1615, Queen's, Red Bull, but acted according to Ward, 1603?). The Christians are assailing Jerusalem. The Turks are on the walls (p. 230). But (p. 234), "The Christians are repulst. Enter at two seuerall dores, Guy and Eustace climbe vp the wals, beate the Pagans," etc. The direction specifies distinctly entrance through the doors by enemies who assault the walls directly above.

¹ That a balcony curtain existed is shown by the Red Bull and Messallina pictures, and among other passages in the plays, by *Henry VIII* (1613), V, 2; by *Wounds of Civil War* (1594, Admiral's), V, 2; and *Antonio's Revenge* (1602, Paul's), I, 2, as well as Act V of the same play.

doors; the "corridor" (rear) stage, if I may term it so, in which the curtain hung from a projecting balcony, thus leaving it uninclosed, but hiding the doors; and the "alcove" stage, in which neither the balcony nor all the doors were concealed, two doors, presumably, lying at either side the curtained space.¹ Brodmeier's stage could be of almost any size, depending on how far out the pillars stood. The corridor stage would, as the name implies, be rather shallow, since it could scarcely be much deeper than the balcony. The alcove stage, in its name, gives a misleading impression of smallness, for the alcove was not necessarily very limited in size. In the Fortune Theater, according to the contract,² the whole stage was to be forty-three feet wide, and in depth was to extend to the middle of the yard, a distance not exceeding twenty-eight feet. The rear stage in such a theater could hardly have been other than an alcove, for a long shallow stage would have been awkward and useless. The alcove, however, could easily have measured twenty feet in width, and then left over ten feet on either side for the doors. There is, therefore, no need of supposing the alcove stage diminutive, although it probably was shallow. All these suggested arrangements are probable enough; perhaps all actually existed; no one form, at least, can without proof be adopted as normal or exclusive.

The alternation theory, however, bases itself almost entirely on the form described by Brodmeier, though it is the most doubtful of all. The Swan picture is no argument for that form of stage, for the shading under the balcony may be interpreted to mean that the balcony projects, in which case the curtain could be suspended from it. The other pictures are unanimously against it, since in each the balcony is not hidden by the stage curtain.³ The objection urged against supposing a curtain on the Swan stage, that, if it was long enough to hide the balcony, it would be awkward to manage and would render the balcony cur-

¹ For if the curtain did not hide the doors, it probably did not hide the balcony either; the natural place to suppose the rear stage is therefore beneath the balcony, and between the doors, the most easily visible position for it.

² HALLIWELL-PHILLIPPS, *Outlines of the Life of Shakespeare*, Vol. I, p. 304.

³ By stage curtain I mean here and elsewhere the curtain hiding the rear stage, as distinguished from that of the balcony, or that possible before a single door, or before some special structure.

tain useless, applies to any other theater as well. Moreover, if spectators sat in the balcony, they would be unable to see any out scene at all.¹ To these practical objections against a curtain concealing the balcony may be added the testimony of the plays themselves.

In *Antonio's Revenge* (1602, Paul's), I, 2, 194, a group of men are serenading a lady. One says: "See, look, the curtain stirs." The direction continues: "The curtain's drawn and the body of Feliche, stabb'd thick with wounds, appears hung up." The lover continues: "What villain bloods the window of my love Death's at thy window, awake, bright Mellida." Near the end of the scene, which is also the end of the act (308, 340), are remarks which show that the body is still in sight. Act II is in a church, and a hearse is brought in with the body of another victim and left there, appearing again in Act III. But in Act II, without the actors leaving the stage and immediately after the hearse scene, the place of action shifts to the scene of Act I, and the father addresses a passionate speech to his son's body. Not till IV, 1, 232, is there a command to take down the body of Feliche. The body hung in the balcony, for allusions to ladies' windows usually refer to the openings of the upper stage, and every indication points to its being out of reach from below. But if the body did appear in the balcony, there is, according to the principles of alternation, a violent clash: the first part of Act II being in a church with a hearse; the second, in front of the palace with the body exposed above. If the balcony, however, projected over the rear stage and was not concealed by the lower curtain, Act II would be easy to explain. The first part of the scene would be played on the rear stage, the action would gradually pass forward, the lower curtains close, the upper ones open, and the scene continue without interruption—the clash entirely avoided.

In the *Wounds of Civil War* (1594, Admiral's) V, 2, "Marius [appears] vpon the wals [of Preneste] with the Citizens" (p. 64). Many kill themselves there, but there is no indication that the

¹ Probably they did not sit there. There is much more reason for thinking that the people shown in the Swan picture are musicians, or actor-spectators of a play within a play, than actual spectators. The proof of this is too long to be given here. One argument, however, is the one in the text—the impossibility of devising any stage which will be consistent with their presence.

bodies are removed—more evidence of a special balcony curtain. Scene 3 uses a throne, however—"Scilla seated in his robes of state is saluted by the Citizens" (p. 67). Therefore, according to alternation, there is a clash, which could again, however, be removed by supposing that the balcony projected over the rear stage.

But it may be objected that, if the rear stage was below the balcony, people in the balcony could not see the scenes underneath them. Even if spectators did not sit there, actors often did, who were supposed to be observing scenes on the rear stage. So it would be in *David and Bethsabe* (1599), I. 1: "He [the Prologue] draws a curtaine and discovers Bethsabe, with her Maid, bathing ouer a spring: she sings, and David sits aboue, vewing her." Here, of course, David should be able to see Bethsabe; but if that is insisted upon, a worse difficulty arises. The very next scene requiries that the balcony be used as the walls of Rabath. If both rear stage and balcony were concealed by the stage curtain, a decided clash would result, for the "spring" furnishing must be removed. If the balcony was above the rear stage, however, as soon as the scene between David and Bethsabe was over, the curtains could have closed below and the action continued without interruption.¹ The balcony in the theater in which this play was given was not behind the rear stage, or clashes count for nothing. The fact that David could not see Bethsabe while she was in the rear stage is of little importance. He could have seemed to see her, the audience could see them both—that was all that was necessary. Similar situations arise with added arguments in *James IV* (1598); *The Looking Glass for London* (1594); and *The Taming of the Shrew* (1623). In *James IV*, Bohan (l. 109, Induction) tells Oberon: "That story haue I set down; gang with me to the gallery, and I'll shew thee the same in action." Perhaps they did not sit in the balcony when the simpler set of act interludes (those printed between each act) were used, for they seem to come on and go off for each interlude; but in the more elab-

¹ Of course, if any hangings representing walls were to be hung out, there would be a clash which no arrangement of the stage could remove, and this instance, though weakening the argument at this point, would strengthen it a little farther on in the discussion of incongruities.

orate set of interludes' there is no hint of their entering and leaving the stage, but rather that they sat somewhere throughout the play observing it. In the *Looking Glass for London*, Oseas the Prophet is "let down over the stage in a throne" (l. 163), and from that point until l. 2020 remains there commenting on nearly every scene. Yet ll. 572-605, for example, have the curtains closed. Did Oseas disappear from view also? In *The Taming of the Shrew*, Sly and his companions sit above to watch the play. It is impossible to suppose that these actor-spectators were concealed from sight during the *out* scenes. Yet that is what the situation would be if the balcony were behind the curtain. The slight unreality involved in their being unable to see the infrequent scenes on the rear stage is not half so confusing as this would be.

From these plays, therefore, it seems that in the theaters where they were produced, and at the time when they were produced, the balcony was not hidden by the lower curtain. Three of them were by Shakespeare's own company, all are contemporary, and all but the *Shrew* were published not long after production, and are therefore of undoubted authority. They do not prove that all theaters were arranged so that the lower curtain did not hide the balcony; they only established a strong presumption that some were. The complete agreement of the *Roxana*, *Messallina*, and *Red Bull* pictures on this point is strong corroboration, even though they are too late in date to be taken as direct proof. The plays and pictures together are, however, sufficient to show that in proposing the use of the balcony as a sure test of a rear-stage scene Brodmeier is making an entirely unwarranted assumption, for the type of theater it presupposes is not known to have existed at all, much less to have been the only form.

For the use of doors as a test there is much stronger evidence. A curtain on the Swan stage would certainly hide the two doors shown in the picture; that on the *Red Bull* stage conceals any stage doors opening upon it;² the *Messallina* and *Roxana* stages,

¹ MANLY, *Specimens of the Pre-Shakspearean Drama*, Vol. II, pp. 351-54.

² The *Red Bull* picture, published in 1672, dates, Mr. Lawrence thinks (*Englische Studien*, Vol. XXXII, Part I, p. 42) from 1656. The footlights and suspended candles show that at this stage in its history it depended upon artificial illumination, and that it therefore was roofed. But this was the most characteristic feature of the "private houses." The author of the *Historia Histronica*, however (published 1699, but written by some one well acquainted with

though they allow the supposition that other doors, not shown in the picture, existed at either side of the stage, hardly suggest any such theory; so that the weight of the evidence offered by the pictures is decidedly in favor of the door test for rear stage scenes.

But that another type of stage is conceivable, and has seemed reasonable to students, is plain from Lawrence's article already referred to, in which he contends that the curtain in a typical theater could not have hidden the doors, although he gives little specific proof, and from two remarks of Genée, who also gives no proof. In the *Jahrbuch* (Vol. XXVI, p. 133) the latter says that there was "in der Mitte des Hintergrundes eine nischenartige Vertiefung der Bühne;" and in *Entwicklung des scenischen Theaters*, p. 31.

In der Mitte des Hintergrundes befand sich aber noch eine durch einen Vorhang zuschliessende Mittelbühne, welche vortrefflich zu verwenden war und durch deren geringe Veränderungen wie auch durch das Schliessen und Oeffnen derselben auch der Phantasie der Zuschauer bei dem so häufigen Szenenwechsel auf die leichteste Art nachhalf.

In other words, both Lawrence and Genée think it possible that the alcove rear stage existed. The plays offer the following evidence, if not directly for this alcove stage, at least against the corridor stage or the stage of Brodmeier. I use again Brodmeier's own tests and principles, citing clashes which prove them self-contradictory:

Property scenes are supposed to be *in* scenes; so are door scenes; yet the following show clashes of door scenes and property scenes; in some cases a curtain being directly mentioned:

Antonio's Revenge (1602, Paul's), II, 1. The act opens in a church; a coffin is brought in, and left on the stage, being used again in Act III.

"The coffin [is] set down; helm, sword, and streamers hung up, placed by the Herald." (Act II). In Act III a page says to Antonio, visiting the church: "Those streamers bear his [Andrugio's, Antonio's father] arms." Antonio says: "Set tapers to the tomb." Soon Andru-

pre-Restoration conditions), describes it (p. 408) as one of the public houses, which were only partially roofed, and which therefore needed no artificial illumination. I have already shown that it once had three doors, though the picture hardly allows room for more than one. The theater must therefore have been rebuilt at some time in its history, and the picture of 1656 can be of little authority for the period before 1603.

gio's ghost rises, saying: "Lo, the ghost of old Andrugio, Forsakes his coffin."

Without the actors leaving the stage, the scene changes to the space before the palace where the body of Feliche is hung up, and the scene closes with the direction: "Exeunt at several doors." Unless one would accept the idea that the tomb remained in plain sight even during the last part of the scene, one must suppose the curtain to have been closed with the change of scene, but that it did conceal the doors.

The Wisdom of Dr. Dodypoll (1600, Paul's), III, 3. The scene is described as a valley near a green hill. Fairies bring in a banquet, and a peasant, spying a cup, steals it and disappears. "Enter the spirit with banquetting stuffe, and missing the pesant, lookes up and downe for him; the rest wondering at him; to them enters the Enchanter." To this company Lassingbergh and Lucilia enter, and the Enchanter binds him by magic. No exeunt direction closes the scene, and the fourth scene, located in another place, opens with the direction: "Enter Alberdure at one doore, and meetes with the Pesant at the other doore." The succeeding (fifth) scene is again at the place of the third scene, beginning with: "Enter Enchanter, leading Luc. and Lass. bound by spirits; who being laid down on a green banck, the spirits fetch in a banquet." The only explanation at all consistent with Brodmeier's theories would be to place the green bank and the banquet on the rear stage: the curtain would close at the end of sc. 3, and open again for sc. 5, but the doors would necessarily be outside the curtain. In any other way a clash would result.

Alchemist (1610, Kings'), V, 1, plainly uses one door at least for the entrance to Lovewit's house. Scene 2 is within the house and uses chests. A clash will therefore result if the doors are concealed by the curtain.

Captain Thomas Stukeley (1605; dated by Simpson, 1598), ll. 120-335 are before an inn, on the way to Tom's chamber, and finally within the chamber, which is entered by a door. The next scene is in an entirely different place and begins with: "Enter at one door Cross the Mercer, at another Spring the Vintner."

Poetaster (acted 1601, Chapel Children), IV, 2, is short,

with hardly fifty lines. At the beginning *Lupus* says: "Shut the door, *lictor*;" but sc. 3 opens at a feast, and the stage is set with chairs or stools, for *Ovid* says: "Gods and goddesses, take your several seats." Again the most obvious staging which will avoid a clash is to place sc. 3 on the rear stage and to suppose that the door was not concealed by the curtains.

Wonder of Women (1606, Blackfriars), III, 1; near the end has a direction: "They lay *Vangue* in *Syphax*' bed and draw the curtains." Act III, sc. 2, begins: "Enter *Scipio* and *Lælius*, with the complements of Roman Generals before them. At the other door, *Massinissa* and *Jugurth*." Even if the curtains mentioned are those of the bed, the bed, according to *Brodmeier*, would be on the rear stage and a clash would result in sc. 2—unless, of course, the doors were outside the curtain.

Timon of Athens (written in 1607?; 1623), V, 1, 2, 3, 4: Scene 1 is before *Timon*'s cave, which *Brodmeier* places in the rear stage (p. 19). sc. 2 is probably before the walls of Athens, as the *Globe* direction says, though there is nothing to set the scene definitely but the third Senator's "in, and prepare." Scene 3, however, is, as plainly as any scene can be, again, as in sc. 1, the woods before *Timon*'s cave; moreover, something now stands for *Timon*'s tomb. *Brodmeier* says this scene is on the front stage, but only, it seems, because he would otherwise be forced into a clash with sc. 4, which is again before the walls of Athens and alludes to the "gates," that is the doors. Yet, if the doors and balcony were outside the curtain, all would be simple—*Timon*'s cave, the woods, and the tomb could be on the rear stage, sc. 1 and 3 would be *in*, the other two be *out*.

Other examples are not difficult to cite: In *Shakespeare*, for example, *Cymbeline*, II, 2, 3; *Taming of the Shrew*, V, 1, 2; *Richard II*, 1, 3, 4; all of which *Brodmeier* explains by more or less acceptable split scenes;¹ but these are enough to show the nature of the illustrations possible. I have chosen examples which represent leading theaters—*Paul's*, the *Rose*, *Blackfriars*, and the *Globe*; these plays suggest that in each the doors were not concealed by the curtain.

¹ See *infra*, p. 31, for explanation of this means of avoiding clashes.

Scenes tending to show the same stage construction are found in several other plays, but the evidence is not directly applicable. The situations are generally of this nature: One or more characters enter, and almost as soon as they are on the stage the curtains open, displaying something surprising or at least unknown to them. Or sometimes, near the end of a scene, the curtains close and characters remaining on the stage exeunt, but, according to the intention of the dramatist, *not* through the curtained space. In many cases beds are in use, so that bed curtains may be meant by the word "curtains" or "discover" of the directions; but since it can certainly be shown that stage curtains existed in every important theater, it is usually more reasonable to suppose that it is the stage curtains which are referred to.

The Woman in the Moon (published 1597; written, Bond, 1591-93, Paul's), I, 1: Four Shepherds ask Nature for a female; she promises them one and they exeunt, after which the maidens "draw the Curtins from before Nature's shop, where stands an Image clad, and some vnclad, they bring forth the cloathed image," and it becomes Pandora. The shepherds could hardly have gone out through the "shop" curtain.

Henry VIII (acted 1613), II, 2: The Lord Chamberlain is reading a letter when Suffolk and Norfolk come to him. They ask: "How is the king imployed?" The Chamberlain replies: "I left him priuate, Full of sad thoughts and troubles." Norfolk suggests that they go in to the king, but the Chamberlain refuses. "Exit Lord Chamberlaine, and the King drawes the Curtaine and sits reading pensively." Suffolk speaks and the king, disturbed, starts up angrily. Brodmeier (p. 57), of course, has the scene begin on the front stage, but, since he supposes all the doors to be behind the curtain, is forced to have the nobles enter and Lord Chamberlain depart through the curtain, the latter action being especially incongruous. If the curtain does not hide the doors, the Lord Chamberlain enters through the curtain, the nobles come in through one door, he exits in the same way, and all is simple, fitting, and clear.

Sir Giles Goosecap (1660, Chapel; acted, Fleay, 1601), V, 2:

The plan is to bring certain people near to the chamber of Clarence, who is feigning sickness, so he may get conversation with Eugenia, whom he loves. Clarence and the Doctor enter; others come a little later and talk of Clarence, as if he were in another room; Clarence does not see them. All but Clarence exeunt; he "drawes the Curtaines and sits within them" (p. 84). Eugenia immediately enters with two friends, and these three talk for two pages before they rouse Clarence. The staging with the alcove stage is simple and consistent; with the doors concealed by the curtain it could not but be confused and utterly unrealistic, for the visitors would have entered through the very space in which he was concealed.

Downfall of Robert, Earl of Huntington (1601, Admiral's), III, 4: An old man, Marian's father, enters disguised, talking of how he is coming to see his daughter. Then "Curtains open: Robin Hood sleeps on a green bank, and Marian strewing flowers on him." Marian greets her father kindly, and Friar Tuck and Jenny, dressed like peddlers, enter. Still more come in, one of the last comers saying to Tuck, "Yonder is the bower," and hides to wait for developments. More striking than the inconsistency of the old man's coming in through the curtain, which was so soon to open and display Robin Hood to him, is the improbability of speaking of the rear stage as "yonder," if one had just entered it, as the speaker would have done had the bower been the rear stage, the easiest explanation, and the doors in its back wall, as Brodmeier would have them.

Antonio's Revenge (1602, Paul's), III, 8: Maria, wife of the murdered Andrugio, is preparing for bed. Scene 1 was in a church about a coffin. Presumably the scene was therefore the rear stage, but now in the beginning of sc. 2, it is on the front stage. While she is thus employed, the settings on the rear stage are being changed, for, l. 64, "Maria draweth the curtain: and the ghost of Andrugio is displayed, sitting on the bed." The ghost tells her how treacherously he has been treated, but finally says: "Sleep thou in rest, lo, here I close thy couch." Then the direction says: "Exit Maria to her bed, Andrugio drawing the curtains," He speaks five more lines and then exits. This, of

course, may refer to the bed curtains, but, if it does, the first part of the scene must be on the rear stage, and the clash of two property scenes would have to be explained; for the alternation theory a much more difficult matter.¹

Other examples such as these are numerous. Among those which may be noted are *Humour Out of Breath* (1608, Revels), III, 4; *Life and Death of Thomas, Lord Cromwell* (1602, Chamberlain's) III, 2;² *II Henry IV* (1594; Chamberlain's), III, 2, 3; *Old Fortunatus* (1600, Admiral's), II, 1; *I Honest Whore* (1604), I, 3, in all of which the incongruity of exit or entrance through the rear stage is marked.

Situations like these, of course, might not seem incongruous to an Elizabethan. If he were accustomed to them, he would receive them as he would any inherently impossible dramatic convention—dramatic time, for example. In that case the illustrations cited merely call attention to an, as yet, unnoticed stage custom. But to arrange the stage so as to avoid this incongruity is so easy that it seems fair to admit these cases as evidence of the alcove rear stage. It is true that two other explanations have been suggested—one by Archer,³ who would have characters in such scenes come around the pillars, as the messenger seems to have done in the Swan picture; the other by Bang,⁴ who would divide the rear stage into two parts. Both are intended to explain how such scenes could be arranged on a stage similar to the Swan's, and therefore are less to be regarded. Archer's explanation is perhaps true for such a theater, but would not apply to the other theaters of which pictures exist. Bang's seems to me quite impossible. Actions on such a rear stage as he pre-

¹ To be sure "curtain" is used in the first direction; "curtains" in the second; but I know no reason for thinking them different. The stage directions, carelessly written and carelessly printed, are not to be too curiously or minutely examined. If there were a difference, "curtains" in the above direction would mean the bed curtain, and "curtain," the stage curtain. But in the same play near the end is the direction, "The curtains are drawn, Piero departeth," where there is no doubt of the plural form, and no possibility that bed curtains are referred to.

² This is the scene which BANG, with amusing exclamation, cites as showing how students have completely forgotten the necessity of providing for entrance to the front stage (*Jahrbuch*, Vol. XL, pp. 223-25). KELLER's answer (*ibid.*, pp. 225-27) is unsatisfactory; there is absolutely no authority for assuming the balcony, as he does in such instances, and in most cases it will not suit the directions at all.

³ *Universal Review*, June 15, 1888, pp. 281-88.

⁴ *Jahrbuch*, Vol. XL, pp. 223-25.

sents—one divided by curtains into two narrow deep parts—would be almost, if not entirely, invisible to a large part of the audience in the old circular theaters. Brodmeier attempts no special explanation of such scenes.

If the alcove stage be granted, directions and situations in the plays are explained which are otherwise puzzling. The direction in *Alphonsus* (1599), l. 1255 is explained: "Let there be a brazen Head set in the middle of the place behind the stage, out of the which cast flames of fire, drums rumble within; enter two priests." The order of directions in *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (1594, Queen's), l. 1890, which Grosart thinks should perhaps be changed, becomes exactly applicable: "Enter two Schollers, sonnes to Lambert and Serlsby. Knocke." The directions in *What You Will* (1607) become intelligible. II, I: The scene is Laverdure's bedroom. "One knocks: Laverdure draws the curtains, sitting on his bed, apparelling himself; his trunk of apparel standing by him," the last showing that a stage curtain was probably used. II, 2: "Enter a schoolmaster, draws the curtains behind, with Battus, Nous, Slip, Nathaniel, and Holofernes Pippo, schoolboys, sitting, with books in their hands." What is the force of "behind"? As the scene is too large to stage it in Brodmeier's "fourth" stage, the curtain "behind" is not one over a single door. The directions exactly fit the situation if the schoolmaster had entered through a door on either side the alcove, and had then drawn open the stage curtain behind him. *Eastward Ho* (1605, Blackfriars), I, 1: "Enter Master Touchstone and Quicksilver at several doors; . . . At the middle door, enter Golding, discovering a goldsmith's shop, and walking short turns before it." This direction, one of the most confusing of all, becomes reasonably plain with the alcove stage and suggests several interesting points. It certainly sounds as if the alcove stage was arranged as a shop, and that Golding, coming through the middle door, drew back the curtain discovering the shop and walked before it. The direction from *Woman in the Moon*, already quoted, is very similar. The shop of *Alexander and Campaspe* (1584, her Majesty's Children and Paul's) is admirably explained by the alcove stage; so is the

pavilion of *David and Bethsabe* (1599), III, 2; and the shop of *Edward IV* (1600), p. 63.¹

The direction of *Eastward Ho*, in saying "the middle door," suggests another consideration. We have assumed that the alcove stage was in the middle between the two other doors; the middle door is probably then the means of entrance to the alcove from the dressing-room. Perhaps the fact that it was usually concealed by the curtain will explain the directions which say, "Enter at one door . . . the other," the dramatist forgetting for the moment the existence of the third entrance, which was usually concealed by the stage curtain.²

These latter illustrations are, however, only of secondary importance. The two great objections to the rear stage of Brodmeier are the fact that a large number of plays show clashes of door scenes with property and curtain scenes, and that in many scenes, if all the doors were concealed by the curtain, the action on the stage would often contradict the plain meaning of the lines. A third argument, hardly capable of direct proof, yet certainly to be carefully considered, is the importance of the doors themselves. They were valuable scenic details; when the balcony is used as the walls of a city, they are nearly always plainly in sight as the gates; when the balcony is the second story of a house, they are its street doors. But, more than this, they had what may be called a symbolic value. By the use of different doors the dramatists were able to show at once that characters entering at the same time came from two or three different places. By the use of scene-boards³ the visible doors

¹Sometimes, however, real separate structures were used on the stage for shops, etc. though I believe the subject of such properties has never been investigated. Their use is clear in *Histrionic* (written 1599?; published 1610): "Enter Lyon-rash to Fourchier sitting in his study at one end of the stage: At the other end enter Voucher to Velure in his shop." Here there should be two doors—one for Lyon-rash, the other for Voucher. The study and the shop can hardly be the doors: they cannot be the rear stage, but they must be on the rear stage so their occupants can be discovered. Other plays probably showing the use of structures are *Faery Pastoral*, *Bartholomew Fair*, and *Arden of Feversham*. This is a subject to which I hope to return at some future date.

²Perhaps the direction means rather that the opening of the middle door discovered the shop. Parallel cases, where doors seem used when one might expect curtains, are the non-Shakespearean *Richard II* (1591-96), V, 1, and the *Trial of Chivalry* (1605), II, 3. It is conceivable that the alcove was closed, not only by the curtains, but also by large doors; but more probably common doors are here referred to.

³The existence of such boards has been denied, but always on theoretical grounds, not by any specific facts. So MATTHEWS ("Conventions of the Drama," pp. 257, 258, in *The His-*

became even more useful, for the boards showed from what precise place each party came. This is made absolutely clear in the directions of *The Cuckqueens' and Cuckolds' Errants* (written 1601, Paul's). The general direction reads: "Harwich. In midde of the Stage Colchester with Image of Tarlton, Signe and Ghirland Vnder him also. The Raungers Lodge, Maldon, A Ladder of Roapes trussed vp neare Harwich. Highest and aloft the Title. The Cuckqueanes and Cuckolds Errants. A Long

torical Novel, 1901), says: "There was no need of the alleged placards declaring the scene; this would have been an intrusion in the eyes of Marlowe's contemporaries, who never cared where the place was so long as the play was interesting. These supposed signs are no more than the Victorian explanation of a need not felt by the Elizabethans; and they are not warranted by the passage of Sidney which is cited in support. So also APPLETON MORGAN (Introduction, *Titus Andronicus*, "Bankside Shakespeare," pp. 31, 32): "But the days when to represent change of scene, placards with 'Africa,' 'Vienna,' 'Paris,' 'Padua,' etc., written upon them were displayed must have been about over when Shakespeare began his career. The realism which began to wheel in a four post bedstead to make a bed room scene . . . certainly would have demanded the retirement of these placards." (See also BRANDL, Introduction, Vol. I, p. 27, and GENEÉ, *Jahrbuch*, Vol. XXVI, pp. 133, 139). But the play mentioned in the text is certainly contemporaneous with Shakespeare, and was presumably played at Paul's playhouse, by no means a poorly furnished theater. It is true that the line in the *Spanish Tragedy*, "Hang up the title, our scene is Rhodes" (IV, 3, l. 16), does not, as BRANDL (*loc. cit.*, p. 28), truly observes, refer to scene-boards, but to the title-boards. These title-boards, or their substitutes, were used as early as 1528 when the Paul's boys gave *Phormio* for Cardinal Wolsey. The secretary of the Venetian ambassador wrote: "The hall in which they dined, and where the comedy was performed, had a large garland of box in front, in the center of which was inscribed in gilt letters, 'Terentii Phormio.'" Venetian State Papers, Jan. 8, 1528. These title-boards are perhaps referred to in the accounts of the Revels: "Syse, cullers, pottes, Assydewe, golde, and silver used and occupied for the Garnyshinge of xiiij titles," etc. (1579, p. 162, when ten plays were given); "Painting of ix titles with compartmentes, xvs" (1580-81, p. 169, when seven plays were given). The familiar passage in the Induction to *Wily Beguiled* (Fleay dates 1596-97; published 1606) establishes the use of these title-boards beyond question, as do also the general directions of Percy's plays.

But scene-boards existed also, as the directions quoted in the text show. They were not, however, such primitive things as popular fancy represents them. The old stage never saw labels like "This is a street," "This is a house," and seldom such as "This is a tree," or "A mount." There is, so far as I am aware, but one existing direction which would go to prove such labels, that in PERCY's *Faery Pastoral* (written 1603, for Paul's), which, after describing the properties and furnishings of the stage, goes on to say, "Now if so be that the Properties of any of These, that be outward, will not serue the turne by reason of concourse of the People on the Stage, Then you may omit the sayd Properties which be outward and supplye their Places with their Nuncupations onely in Text Letters. Thus for some." Even here the labels are only a makeshift, and the real properties are assumed as usual. The scene-boards were not to take the place of furnishings so much as the place of programs. It would often be difficult even now to indicate by scenery whether the place of any particular scene were New York, London, or Paris, and this difficulty the scene-boards did away with. JUSSELAND (*Shakespeare in France*, p. 63) shows that early artists also felt the necessity of labels, reproducing a picture of Benozzo Gozzoli's where such a label is used, and (*Furnivall Memorial*, p. 186) quotes a prologue from an old French play, to the effect, that as for the place names

"vous les pavez cognoistre
Par l'escritel que dessus voyez estre."

That they existed in Elizabethan times, the citations in the text show.

Fourme." The play makes this confusing direction plain. Over one door was the word "Harwich;" over another, "Maldon;" over the middle entrance, "Colchester," with the sign of the inn which the rear stage seems to have represented, for in Act V two maids in this inn sit on the "long fourme" and tell each other dreams. The directions are all in the past tense, as if the author were describing an actual performance. Act I, scene 1, begins, "They entered from Maldon," and the scene all occurs in that place. Scene 2 says, "They [two rogues] mett from Maldon and Harwich," and one says to the other, "Thou beest welcome to Colchester." Scene 3 is in the same place; scene 4, in Harwich, beginning, "They entered from Harwich all" (p. 17), and containing an allusion to "that Ladder, hong." The play continues with this same sort of directions until the end, the place of action being consistent with the place designated by the sign above the doors through which the characters enter. Sidney's famous remark in the *Apology for Poetry* (1581) illustrates the same custom, again connecting the scene-boards with the doors: "What childe is there, that comming to a Play, and seeing *Thebes* written in great letters vpon an olde doore, doth beleue that it is *Thebes*?" (p. 52), and (p. 63), "You shall haue *Asia* of the one side and *Affrick* of the other, and so many other vnder-kingdoms, that the Player, when he commeth in, must euer begin with telling where he is or els the tale will not be conceined;"—obviously there are limitations to the number of scene-boards. Jasper Mayne in his poem on Jonson, in *Jonsonus Virbius* (1638), says that in Jonson's plays "The stage was still a stage, two entrances Were not two parts o' the world, disjoin'd by seas." So Envy, in the Prologue to the *Poetaster* (1601, Chapel Children), comes expecting to find the scene of the play laid in London. Instead she discovers, obviously from some *visible* source, that it is Rome, saying

The scene is, ha!

Rome? Rome? and Rome? Crack, eye strings, and your balls
Drop into earth.

The triple mention, in view of these other references, suggests that she is reading scene-boards over each door, and from their

uniformity discovers that the scene throughout the play is to be in one city. In *Eastward Ho* (1605, Blackfriars), IV, 1, "Enter Slitgut with a pair of ox-horns, discovering Cuckhold's Haven above," certainly alludes to a similar thing, for that is where the scene is located. Perhaps such a direction as "Enter two Carpenters under Newgate" of *Warning for Fair Women* (1598, Chamberlain's), II, l. 1510, is an evidence of this same custom. This would be perhaps the easiest way to explain ll. 690-870, and 1913-52, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (1594, Queen's), in which characters on one part of the stage are able by looking through a glass to see events supposed to be occurring miles away, but which are really acted on the stage at the same time. *Common Conditions* (ca. 1576) and *Two Lamentable Tragedies* (1601) are two other plays which suggest some such conventionalized use of the doors with scene-boards. *Jocasta* also (Grey's Inn, 1566) perhaps used them. Neglecting, however, these few less certain illustrations, the unquestioned ones show clearly that this custom of scene-boards prevailed at the beginning of the seventeenth century. They do not, of course, show how general it was, but there is nothing in the directions to indicate that it was anything unusual, and Sidney's and Mayne's reference would imply that it was widely practiced at two widely different dates. All connect it closely with the doors also, which, if this was an established custom, must therefore have been in sight most if not all of the time.

The importance of the doors from this and other causes mentioned, and the necessity that they be in sight throughout the play, the clashes resulting from supposing them only on the rear stage, the incongruous situations arising if all exits from the front stage were made through the curtained space, compel the opinion that in some theaters at least the doors were not hidden by the curtain. I would not claim but one form of theater. The Swan could not have had an alcove stage; the Red Bull picture shows no alcove stage; the Roxana and Messallina pictures, though they might be construed to do so, perhaps do not. But, in view of the evidence of the plays, on the one hand, and, on the other, of the lateness of date of the three pictures, and the general

inapplicability of the Swan picture, it does not seem too much of an assumption to admit the alcove stage as one of the possible forms, if not as the most general form of stage construction.

Probably Brodmeier would object that rear-stage scenes, and "fourth" stage scenes were being confused, and that the alcove stage would not be large enough for all the rear-stage scenes of the plays. On the contrary, the curtained space of the *Roxana*, the *Messallina*, or the *Red Bull* picture, even if very shallow, would be large enough for practically every scene certainly played on the rear stage. The plays do demand a rear stage of considerable size; the following directions prove that: "An arras is drawne, and behinde it (as in sessions) sit the L. Maior, Iustice Suresbie, and other Justices; Sheriffe Moore and the other Sherife sitting by. Smart is the plaintife, Lifter the prisoner at the barre" (p. 6, *Sir Thomas More*, ca 1590). "Winchester, Arundel, and other Lords, discovered; the Lord Treasurer kneeling at the council-table" (p. 188, *Sir Thomas Wyatt*, 1607, Queen's). In II *Tamburlaine*, II, 4 (1690, Admiral's), a bed and eleven people occupied the rear stage, and in *Lust's Dominion* (1657, but certainly an early play), I, 3, at least seven people are discovered. More instances might be cited, but I know of no specific direction for more people than this to be discovered on the rear stage. But because the rear stage was large enough to hold eleven people and a bed is no reason for supposing a larger stage than that behind the curtains of the pictures. Brodmeier's rear-stage scenes may require a larger stage, but the proof that they were rear-stage scenes is because, on account of them, the rear stage must have been large. Such argument in a circle proves nothing. Even if these were rear-stage scenes, the rear stage of the *Messallina* or the *Roxana* stage would probably suffice. Brodmeier, in making the distinction between scenes on the *Vorderbühne* and *Hinterbühne*, or what I, in consequence, have called *out* and *in* scenes, seems to have forgotten that most, if not all, *Hinterbühne* scenes are really full stage scenes. On his stage, especially, no marked distinction between the two stages could have existed. An alcove stage, perhaps, was elevated above

the floor of the rear stage,¹ but on the Swan Theater stage, as soon as the imagined curtains are drawn, no distinction remains. The alcove stage is amply sufficient for staging all the unquestioned rear-stage scenes of plays dating between 1577 and 1603. It need not necessarily have been small. As has been pointed out, it could in the Fortune have been twenty feet long, and then have left ten feet on either side for the doors. In the Roxana and Messallina pictures the curtained space is represented as at least twelve feet wide, and the Roxana does not show the whole width.² Brodmeier denies (p. 62) that the curtains of these pictures—the only ones showing a curtain of any kind, one remembers—are true stage curtains, because the concealed space is too small; but at the same time is forced to think the cell of Prospero in the *Tempest* not the rear stage, because the rear stage which he assumes is too large for it (p. 64). The fact is that Brodmeier, in increasing the importance of the rear stage to fit the alternation theory, has increased its size until, in both size and frequency of use, it surpasses the front stage. Yet the unmistakable evidence of the plays and the pictures is that the front, not the rear stage, was the larger and the more used. Common-sense points to the same consideration. To suppose, as Brodmeier does (p. 8), that all the “play” in the *Taming of a Shrew* was on the rear stage is, on the face of it, unreasonable. Speech on the rear stage, inclosed as he would have it, would be inaudible to most of the house, and action so far removed from the audience, especially on a stage whose front portion was crowded with spectators, would be invisible. Instead of most actions occurring on the rear stage, no matter whether it were the alcove stage or Brodmeier’s, the larger number of scenes, even when they began on the rear stage, must have moved down toward the front of the stage, into the center of the theater, close to the audience. This is perhaps one reason why so few scenes open or close with “situations.” The door and balcony tests, then, rest

¹ This supposition would explain a little more easily than the balcony *Wounds of Civil War* (1594, Admiral’s), IV, 1; *Titus Andronicus* (1600, Chamberlain’s and others), V, 2.

² The basis for this estimate is the height of the railing, which could be scarcely less than a foot; nothing is allowed, moreover, for perspective.

on a false view of the stage and disregard the plain evidence of the plays.

The only other important test¹ which Brodmeier employs is that of the use of properties: scenes set with properties are from that reason rear stage scenes.² For this test there seems to a modern reader to be more probability than for any other. Naturally, if there was a curtain, the properties would be arranged behind it. This is especially true of a certain class of properties, like rocks, shops, trees, woods, and tombs, which are naturally immovable. It is true to a lesser degree of beds and thrones. The placing of such furnishings takes time and, if done in plain

¹The possibility of confusing the stage curtain and bed curtain has already been discussed. It should be noted that the curtain is sometimes referred to in different ways. A very common mode of indicating it is by the word "discover": "Winchester, Arundel, and other Lords, discovered; the Lord Treasurer kneeling at the council-table." (*Sir Thomas Wyatt*, p. 188, 1607, Queen's). Sometimes, however, doors are used for discoveries—as in *Woman is a Weathercock* (pp. 49, 50, Whitefriars, entered 1611). "Enter Scudmore, like a serving man, with a letter." "Scudmore passeth one door, and entereth the other, where Bellafont sits asleep in a chair, under a taffata canopy." Sometimes, as BRODMEIER suggests (p. 92), "enter" means rather a discovered scene. So in *Cymbeline*, II, 2 (folio), "Enter Imogen in her bed, and a lady," the scene seems surely an *in scene*, as does also *Histrionmastix* (1610; dated by Simpson, 1599), II, 1. "Enter Plenty in Majesty, upon a Throne; heapes of gold; Plutus, Ceres & Bacchus doing homage;" and "Enters a Schoomaker, sitting vpon the stage at worke;" *George A Greene* (p. 993, 1599, Sussex's; Henslowe, 1593). However, "Enter Semele drawne out in her bed," *Silver Age* (p. 154, 1613), clearly should be a discovery, but quite as clearly is not. Sometimes, not always, the word "arras" means the curtain, a circumstance which makes doubtful another of Brodmeier's tests. In the following direction it seems very clearly the curtain: "An arras is drawne, and behinde it (as in sessions) sit the L. Maior, Iustice Suresbie, and other Justices; Sheriffe Moore and the other Sherife sitting by. Smart is the plaintife, Lifter the prisoner at the barre" (*Sir Thomas More* p. 6, ca. 1590). The only test of Brodmeier's of any importance not yet discussed is the use of the trap, which he suggests to have been inside the curtain. See the following scenes to show that it was not always so: *Looking Glass for London*, II, 558 ff.; *The Wonder of Women*, III, 1; and the general direction to Percy's MSS play *Aphrodisial* (dated 1602, for Paul's), "A Trap door in the middle of the stage."

A test for the rear stage not mentioned by Brodmeier, but given by Kilian, is the presence of "dead" or "sleeping" persons in a scene with no one to remove them. Usually bodies are removed, something in directions or text showing plainly that this was done, as in *Antonio's Revenge* (1602, Paul's), IV, 1, or II *Tamburlaine* (1590, Admiral's), II, 3. Even when there is no hint of removal, but when other characters are on the stage who probably could bear away the bodies, it is often best to suppose that the specific direction is merely forgotten. But in *Endimion* (1571, Paul's), II, 3, it is much better for the play that Endimion remain asleep upon the stage, and the same is true in *Dido* (1594, Chapel), II, 1, of Ascanius. In *Edward I* (1593), sc. 16, there is no one left to remove the body, and in II *Edward IV* (1600, Derby's), p. 155, the bodies of the two princes seem brought on the stage for the sole purpose of leaving them there.

²BRODMEIER says (p. 97): "Bühneninventar wird nur auf die Hinterbühne gebracht," He does feel forced to have (p. 14) the bed of II *Henry IV*, IV, 4, stand on the front stage for a little while, but says: "Dennach ware dieses die einzige Stelle die ein grösseres Inventarstück auf die Vorderbühne bringt." The exception implied in "grösseres" can mean little, however, for (p. 91) he supposes *Coriolanus*, I, 3, a rear stage scene because two stools are used in it.

sight, more or less disturbs dramatic illusion. We modern readers, accustomed to a stage with an ideal of complete illusion, naturally tend to put such scenes on the rear stage, where they could be arranged out of the sight of the audience. Yet if "clashes" mean anything this supposition is not true. In many plays a property scene occurs immediately after another property scene, or after a scene for some other reason to be considered an *in* scene. One scene or the other, according to the alternation theory, must therefore have been played on the front stage. Of course, one fundamental principle of the theory is that no property did stand on the front stage, but another is that the performance was continuous. One or the other must give way, and the falseness of the first is shown by the *Swan* picture itself, where the bench, the only property shown by any of the pictures, stands, not in the supposed curtain space, but far out upon the front stage.

The general direction of the *Faery Pastoral* (written for Paul's in 1603) shows the same thing:

Highest, aloft and on the Top of the Musick Tree the Title The Faery Pastorall, Beneath him pind on Post of the Tree The Scene Eluida Forrest. Lowest off all ouer the Canopie ΝΑΠΑΙΤΒΟΔΑΙΟΝ or Faery Chappell. A Kiln of Brick. A Fowen Cott. A Hollowe Oake with vice of wood to shutt to. A Lowe well with Roape and Pullye. A Fourme of Turues. A greene Bank being Pillowe to the Hed but. Lastly A Hole to creep in and out. Now if so be that the properties of any of These, that be outward, will not serue the turne by reason of concourse of the People on the Stage, Then you may omitt the sayd Properties which be outward and supplye their Places with their Nuncupations onely in Text Letters. Thus for some.

"The sayd Properties which be outward" can hardly mean anything else than that some usually stood out on the front stage, and that they would thus be in the way of the spectators sitting on the stage. Probably in this play these properties were the kiln, the bank, the cot, the hollow oak, and the well; for only the chapel seems to be concealed by the "canopy." These instances alone show one of the main principles of alternation not always to have been true; the following scenes from other plays indicate the same thing:

Dido (1594, Chapel Children, III, 1).—If the pictures which Aeneas is describing as visible were represented at all, they must have been hung on the front stage, for sc. 2 must begin with the discovery of Ascanius.

In *Looking Glass for London* (1594), l. 558, Remilia says: "Shut close these Curtaines straight, and shadow me." "They draw the Curtaines, and Musicke plaies." Then Magi enter, and, at the command of the king, "the Magi with their rods beate the ground, and from vnder the same riseth a braue Arbour." Meanwhile the king exits, to return in more splendid attire. Directly after his re-entrance it thunders, the king "drawes the Curtaines, and findes her stroken with thunder, blacke." Here there is not only a property, the arbour, outside the curtain, but the trap-door, which Brodmeier supposes in the rear stage, is also obviously not concealed by it. In much the same way in *Wonder of Women* (1606, Blackfriars) the altar and trap are without the curtains in III, 1, and V, 1.

David and Bethsabe (1599): In II, 2, there is a banquet; in sc. 3, a banquet; but in sc. 4 a throne and the balcony as the walls of a town are employed together. Thus three property scenes come in succession.

Alexander and Campaspe (1584, Paul's and Her Majesty's Children), III, 3, 4: If the shop in which sc. 3 occurs was the rear stage, as is at least possible, Diogenes' tub of sc. 4 must have been on the front stage. In the last scene the shop is described as in sight at the same time. A similar situation is to be found in V, 3, 4. This play is most easily explained by making the alcove stage the shop, and by placing the tub near one of the doors. It is curious to observe however—and this perhaps would make one think the shop a structure—that no concealed entrance is necessary for it; all people appearing in it go in and come out of it in plain sight of the audience.

Alphonsus (1599), III, 1, 2: Scene 1 uses a chair which should be throne-like, but perhaps was not; so does sc. 2, but the scene is in a different country. Scene 2, moreover, employs a trap-door and, perhaps, woods, a change of place from the palace to a solitary grove occurring without clearing the stage. Unless

one prefers supposing chair and woods on the rear stage at the same time, one must place either woods or chair on the front stage.

Sapho and Phao (1584, Paul's and Her Majesty's Children), IV, 3: At the end of the scene Sapho orders her maids to "draw the curtains." There is no exeunt direction for them. Scene 4 should use a forge in the shop of Vulcan; in V, 1, this forge is alluded to as present; it was probably used, therefore, in both scenes; in V, 1, it is apparently near one of the doors, and the seat of Sapho is also in view.

The Old Wives' Tale (1595, Queen's): This play is one succession of property clashes. If the cell of Sacrapant is the rear stage, both the well and the cross must be outside the curtain (see Part II for more detailed description).

These scenes are none of them conclusive, for by using structures for the shop, etc., or doors for some of the discoveries, it is perhaps possible to explain all the plays without placing properties on the front stage. But why should this be considered necessary? The *Faery Pastoral* and *Swan* pictures show that properties did stand on the front stage. It must have been set with stools for the spectators, and these were no doubt used in scenes requiring seats, even perhaps for such large scenes as the Senate of Rome. Tables also are brought in extremely often or assumed without any direction whatever. If all scenes where seats are used were classed as *in* scenes, many plays would be nothing but a continual series of clashes; the *Staple of News* (1625), for example, or almost any of Jonson's plays. Plays are extremely numerous, moreover, in which larger properties are brought in; for example, II *Henry VI*, (1623); *If You Know Not Me You Know Nobody* (1605), and *Golden Age* (1611, Queen's at Red Bull),¹ which show that even so awkward a property as a bed was

¹ II *Henry VI*, folio, 134, has the direction: "Bed put forth", *If You Know Not Me You Know Nobody* (1605), p. 200: The scene is an antechamber in which a commission is waiting for Elizabeth. A woman says she will tell Elizabeth, but Tame says: "It shall not need . . . Presse after her, my Lord." "Enter Elizabeth in her bed." She says: "We are not pleased with your intrusion, Lords." This can perhaps, since it is so very unrealistic, be interpreted as a discovered scene. *The Golden Age*, 1611 (Queen's, Red Bull), p. 67, cannot so be explained, however. The direction reads: "Enter the foure old Beldams drawing out Danae's bed: she in it." The scene changes as in the instance just mentioned, from antechamber to bedroom.

sometimes brought upon the stage without the slightest explanation. Perhaps these properties were not used on the front stage, but wherever used they were brought on in sight of the audience, which amounts to the same thing. The only obvious reason for not supposing properties on the front stage is the difficulty, delay, and lack of realism in the bringing on and taking off. Difficulty and delay one may admit, but realism—so far as the plays go, there is no indication that the Elizabethans were at all adverse to the bringing on of furnishings before them. If one can judge from the frequent occurrence and long continuance of the custom, they rather enjoyed it. At any rate, the burden of proof is decidedly upon the alternationists when they assume that, because of this dislike, or more probably because of modern dislike for such a practice, properties were never used on the front stage.

Of the other principles, the one that no two *in* scenes, differently set, could directly succeed each other, is of course undeniable. Some pause, however short, was necessary for the rearrangement. The alternationists, insistent upon a continuous performance, have however, assumed that the dramatists composed special *out* scenes for the sole purpose of filling these pauses.¹ Any short scene apparently unnecessary to the plot, they, for that reason, label at once as an *out* scene, and the scenes before and after as *in* scenes. The *Merchant of Venice* (1596, 1600), III, 5, is a case in point.² It is the punning conversation of Launcelot and Jessica, and, its value not being easily apparent to a modern reader, it is at once selected as an *out* scene, even though it ends the act; and there is no reason, therefore, for supposing an *out* scene at all. Having determined that scene 5 is an *out* scene, of course, scene 4 becomes as *in* scene—and another proof of alternation is thus secured. But such scenes may have arisen from very different reasons: to allow a change of costume, or, as perhaps in this case, to give the actor of the part of Launcelot an opportunity to display his talents. An author did not need to bother himself

¹ KILIAN (*Jahrbuch*, XXXVI, p. 235) is so insistent upon a continuous performance that he denies even the act intermissions, unmindful of the numerous clashes which would result and the specific directions, of such plays as *Wars of Cyrus* (1594, Chapel), I; the "plat" of *Dead Man's Fortune* (1592-93); *Wonder of Women* (1606, Blackfriars); and all of Percy's plays, written apparently for Paul's at the beginning of the seventeenth century.

² See KILIAN, *loc. cit.*

to fill the slight pauses arising from the stage management. Most of the pauses must have been short—the *out* scenes suggested to fill them average about two minutes in length; why should the spectators for so short a time require special amusement? Such scenes did not shorten the play, nor, according to the theory, improve it; they were mere stop-gaps. If it were necessary to have something going on, the orchestra was always ready to play or the clown to come in with his jigs and nonsense.¹ The alternation theory, when it goes so far as this, seems to me to be solving a non-existent difficulty, and to be useless and improbable. As presented by Brodmeier, however, it is much more credible. He admits the act intermissions (see, for example, p. 79); he admits the use of music, even within the act, to fill the time used in setting properties (p. 90); he recognizes split scenes, without emphasizing, however, that they are a custom before unnoted by students, and therefore deserving of more attention.²

With all these exceptions and variations—and without them the theory is not to be received—the alternation theory loses most of its force as a constructive influence on the plays. *In* scenes were not unnecessarily preceded by *out* scenes; there were a number of ways to avoid them, and Brodmeier wisely does not emphasize, indeed hardly alludes to, what former writers have made much of. As stated by him, the theory amounts, constructively, hardly to more than saying that *in* scenes were often preceded by *out* scenes—a fact no one would deny. But in attempting to prove alternation important and of wide applica-

¹ (See HALL, quoted in BULLEN's Marlowe, Vol. I, p. xx).

² In a split scene the action begins on the rear stage, but gradually transfers itself to the front stage. At first it uses properties, and the impression of location is strong, but toward the end the conversation itself usually shows either by an absence of reference or by some direct hint that the setting is no longer before the audience. Some such scene seems to be described by GENEE (*Entwicklung des scenischen Theaters*, pp. 42, 43) as occurring on the stage of Johann Rist, 1647 in Königsberg—a stage which he thinks showed English influence. A typical scene occurs in *Histrionastix*, II, 1, 2 (written 1599?; published 1610). Scene 1 begins; "Enter Plenty in Majesty, upon a Throne; heapes of gold; Plutus, Ceres, Bacchus doing homage." Scene 2 has a curtain drawn discovering a "Market set about a Crosse". The throne is left vacant at l. 46, when the curtain could have been closed, the action transferred to the front stage, and the rear stage rearranged.

Split scenes must be assumed very often if the alternation theory is to be held at all. Brodmeier even in Shakespeare is compelled to resort to them many times; for example, *Richard II*, 1, 3, 4 (p. 84); *Henry VIII*, 1, 2, 3 (p. 86); *Richard III*, 4, 5 (p. 92); *Hamlet*, III, 1, 2 (p. 94).

tion he uses tests for *in* scenes which are found, when applied logically and completely to contemporary plays, to be self-contradictory and rather to discredit than prove the theory. They rest either on an unproved reconstruction of the stage, as in the case of the door and balcony tests, or, in that of the properties, on a modern idea of dramatic propriety. The whole theory as an important factor in play-construction is as yet only a figment of the imagination; and the fact that the plays of Shakespeare have been arranged according to it proves hardly more than that the imagination has worked consistently. The more complete a play is in directions, the more difficulty does it present when one tries to make it conform to the alternation system. Conversely, the early plays, like *Cambises* (ca. 1570), which have almost no stage or property directions, probably because they were played on the simplest of stages and with practically no furnishings, are for that reason the easiest to arrange into brilliant examples of alternation. All this throws doubt on the theory.

But worse than this is an objection which not only would make it unproved, but unprovable. Perhaps no plays can be accepted as reliable evidence in this matter. The alternation theory rests largely on the succession of scenes, and must therefore deal with copies of the plays which represent them as they were actually produced. Such notes as the following are therefore disquieting: From the printer's address, *Tamburlaine*, 1592:

I have purposely omitted and left out some fond and frivolous gestures, digressing, and, in my poor opinion, far unmeet for the matter, which I thought might seem more tedious unto the wise than any way else to be regarded, though haply they have been of some vain-conceited fondlings greatly gaped at, what time they were showed upon the stage in their graced deformities.

A note in a MS version of *Bonduca* (*Athenæum*, February 14, 1903) explaining an hiatus in the text:

The occasion why these [scenes] are wanting here, the books whereby it was first acted from is lost; and this hath beene transcribed from the fowle papers of the Author wh. were found.

Stationer to the Reader, 1647 Folio of Beaumont and Fletcher:

One thing I must answer before it is objected; 'tis this. When these comedies and tragedies were presented on the stage, the actors omitted some scenes and passages with the author's consent as occasion led them: and when private friends desired a copy, they then and justly too, transcribed what they acted; but now you have both all that was acted and all that was not, even the full perfect originals without the least mutilation, so that were the authors living they themselves would challenge neither more nor less than what is here put down, this volume being now so complete and finished that the reader must expect no future alterations.

If publishers took the liberty of editing whole scenes away, if the authors MSS do not represent the acted versions, if these MSS were themselves sometimes incomplete and defective, there is little chance for proving a theory which rests entirely on the acted alternation of scenes.

Yet if the alcove stage be allowed, there certainly are in the plays hints of alternation. *Old Fortunatus* (1600, Admiral's), perhaps by chance, perhaps by the very necessities of the story, falls into an almost perfect succession of *in* and *out* scenes; so does *Antonio's Revenge* (1602, Paul's), if one assume several split scenes. *Sir Giles Goosecap* (1606, Chapel), V; *Edward I* (1593), V; *Arden of Feversham* (1592), V, provided the texts are accepted as complete, also illustrate it. In most of these cases the directions themselves practically demand the rear stage. When that is the case, no one can deny the existence of alternation. Sometimes it does even happen that an unfurnished scene intervenes between two obvious rear-stage scenes, and alternation is undoubtedly illustrated. But when, as most of the time, alternation rests only on unproved tests arising from an unproved stage, and is based upon the exact succession of scenes in texts of whose integrity, in view of contemporary comments, no one can be sure, the theory becomes rather a pleasant exercise of the imagination, an imposition of modern ideas upon ancient custom, than an established principle of the universal method of Elizabethan staging. It is unproved as yet, and, in view of the difficulty of securing adequate tests or absolutely certain sources of information, seems almost incapable of proof. It may be accepted as an occasional method of staging; but as the universal

and common and fundamental principle which every dramatist was bound to observe, it certainly cannot be accepted. Indeed some plays cannot at all be explained by it; these, with the staging which they illustrate, will be considered in Part II.

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SOME PRINCIPLES OF ELIZABETHAN STAGING¹

PART II

Besides the objections against accepting alternation as the universal method of Elizabethan staging, there is another consideration which, though not absolutely excluding the possibility of alternation, suggests the existence of an entirely different practice.

Some plays, no matter how thoroughly proved alternation might be, could not be explained by it. Specific scenes from them have already been alluded to, but it is as complete plays that they present difficulties not easily to be solved. They illustrate a dramatic convention long since disused; never, indeed, fully recognized by modern students as existing in plays of the Shakespearean theater. This convention allowed the presence upon the stage of a property or furnishing which was incongruous to the scene in progress, and which, during that scene, was thought of as absent, though standing in plain sight. This incongruity took two forms: either the close juxtaposition upon the stage of two properties which in reality should have been a much greater distance apart, or the presence of a property in a scene where it could never naturally have been; as a tree, for example, in the midst of a room scene.) It is directly in contradiction to our modern ideal of securing complete illusion and a perfectly harmonious stage picture. A stage with such incongruity could attempt no stage picture at all; it would rather by its properties suggest as by symbols the scene of action. That the Elizabethan stage could have been so unrealistic seems to us absurd and improbable, but the probability of this staging does not depend upon whether it would be acceptable to us. If pre-Elizabethan staging exhibited this same incongruity, if there were Elizabethan customs tending to create a similarly symbolic stage, the belief that such a stage actually existed in Shakespeare's time becomes, not absurd and impossible, but thoroughly reasonable.) As to

¹For illustration of the principle of staging described in Part I in connection with *Jocasta*, see Bapst, *Essai sur l'histoire du théâtre* (Paris, 1893), esp. p. 253; or (as earlier and better) the plate attached to *Il Granchio*, *Comedia di L. Salvati*. In Firenze 1596.

pre-Elizabethan conditions no special investigation is necessary, for Chambers in the *Mediæval Stage*, and Creizenach in his *Geschichte des neueren Dramas*, in tracing the development of staging from the origin of the modern drama to the time of Shakespeare, have given ample proof that a similar staging, indeed, that the identical conventions, had existed for centuries. I do not attempt even to summarize the points which they make, but only to indicate briefly how the mediæval staging with *sedes*, "houses," etc., was closely related to the staging of these plays of Shakespeare's day.

When the drama began within the churches with the liturgical plays, there was, of course, no attempt to make a completely congruous stage picture. The sepulcher¹ of the Easter play and the crib of the Christmas play² were actually and more or less realistically represented, but only symbolically suggested the rest of the picture to the auditors. The action of the play might be before a cave, on the way to the sepulcher, in the city of Jerusalem, in Galilee, where the author willed, but the place of the play was always the church. Any complete stage picture was undreamed of. When the plays moved out into the churchyard and the market-place, they kept, as Chambers shows,³ their method of presentation much as it was. He prints a plan of the Donauschingen passion-play dating from the sixteenth century, in which the *loci*, "houses," etc., are arranged as follows, beginning at the west (?) end—hell, Gethsemane, Olivet; Herod's palace, Pilate's palace, the pillar of scourging, the pillar of the cock, the house of Caiaphas, the house of Ananias, the house of the Last Supper; the graves of the dead who arise, the three crosses, the sepulcher, heaven. The incongruity of this staging is, of course, marked, consisting especially in the close juxtaposition of widely separated places. When such plays, however, came to be played on stages with these *sedes* and "houses" crowded together as portrayed by the miniatures of the Valenciennes Passion,⁴ it amounted to the presence of properties in scenes where they were not supposed to be, and both forms of incongruity were illustrated. Heaven,

¹ Chambers, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 22 ff.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 42 ff.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 80 ff.

⁴ 1547; see Petit de Julleville, *Histoire de la langue et de la littérature françaises*, Vol. II, p. 416; or Jusserand, *Shakespeare in France*, p. 63.

beneath it a hall, then Nazareth, the temple, Jerusalem, the Golden Gate, a square sea upon which rides a ship, hell mouth—all are crowded upon the Valenciennes stage at one time. This must have been the condition in any play of the mediæval type played in a limited space. Jusserand¹ comments on this sort of staging in the following way:

Plays being acted now within a small space, inside a closed building, "simultaneous scenery" was used. On the same canvas were painted in summary fashion and in close juxtaposition all the places where the events in the play were located: a forest was represented by a tree; the Lybian mountains, by a rock; Athens, Rome, or Jerusalem, by a portico with the name written above, as in the mystery mansions, as in Gozzoli's frescoes at Pisa, as on the English stage under Elizabeth, "'Thebes' written in great letters upon an olde doore" said Sidney.²

He also quotes³ a scene-shifter's description of the scenery used in a performance of *Pandoste* at the Hotel de Bourgogne, 1631, and reproduces the original sketches: "In the center of the theater there must be a fine palace; on one side, a large prison where one can be entirely seen; on the other side a temple; below, the prow of a ship, a low sea, reeds, and steps."⁴ This was for the first day. The second day of the play required "two palaces, a peasant's house, and a wood." This play and the Valenciennes picture, therefore, show much the same condition which occurs in the Elizabethan plays under discussion—places represented close together which really should have been miles apart, and properties incongruous to all scenes but the ones they were supposed to locate, these two customs uniting to make impossible any congruous stage picture.

In English dramatic history writers have emphasized the processional plays more than the standing plays; but Chambers mentions several which he thinks were not of the former type. So a series of London plays, traceable perhaps to the beginning of the sixteenth century, was "cyclical in character but not processional."⁵ The *Creed Play* at York was stationary, and was

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 69.

² Lawrence (*Englische Studien*, Vol. XXXII, No. 1, p. 41) writes to the same effect. Neither of these writers, however, suggests the survival of the custom on the Shakespearean stage.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 69, 70.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 71, 75.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 119.

acted in the common hall.¹ "The parochial plays," common throughout England, "were always, so far as can be seen, stationary."² The *Ludus Coventriae* Chambers thinks also a stationary play.³ Sometimes the play was actually on a platform, as at Chelmsford, Kingston, Reading, and Dublin.⁴ *The Satire of the Three Estates*, played at Cupar in 1535, was certainly a stationary play, and so was the Digby *Mary Magdalen*. In this latter were represented Mary's castle, perhaps at Bethany, Jerusalem, a stage for the devil with a place under it for hell, an arbor in which Mary lies down to sleep, Lazarus' tomb, and "Marcylle," which is separated from Jerusalem by a sea on which Mary embarks in a ship. There is apparently a rock in this sea, and a temple at Marcylle, though this is not quite so clear. Heaven seems an elevated place, to which Mary is raised; from it clouds and angels descend. The Cornish plays, given in circular playing-places, must also have been stationary; so was the Lincoln play of *Tobias*. The following passage in the town records shows its character:

1564, July: A note of the perti . . . the properties of the staige . . . played in the moneth of July anno sexto regni reginae Elizabethae, &c., in the tyme of the mayoralty of Richard Carter, whiche play was then played in Brodgaite in the seid citey, and it was of the storye of Tobias in the Old Testament.

The properties are described as follows:

Hell mouth, with a neither chap, a prison with a coveryng, Sara[']s] chambre, a greate idoll with a clubb, a tombe with a coveryng, the cite of Jerusalem with towers and pynacles, the cite of Raignes with towers and pynacles, the cite of Nynyvye, the Kyng's palace of Nynyve, olde Toby's house, the Isralytes house and the neighbures house, the Kyng's palace at Laches, a fyrmament with a fierye clowde and a duble clowde.⁵ Its cities, palaces, tombs, etc., since it was a "standing" play "played in Brodgaite," must have been used at one playing-place, and, in view of what we know of mediæval custom, simultaneously. In principle the staging could not have been very different from that represented in the Valenciennes miniature. Yet it was played in 1564, five years after Elizabeth began to reign.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

² *Ibid.*, p. 122.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 421. The division into separate pageants is due to the modern editor.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

⁵ *Hist. Mss. Com. Reports*, XIV-VIII, pp. 57, 58.

Creizenach,¹ moreover, thinks that the "houses," etc., mentioned so frequently in the records of the Revels office were for plays staged after this same manner. So ca. 1571² *Lady Barbara*, *Effigia*, *Ajax and Ulisses*, *Narcisses*, *Cloridon and Radiamanta*, and *Paris and Vienna* were furnished with "apt howses, made of Canvasse, fframed, ffashioned and paynted accordingly; as mighte best serve theier severall purposes;" 1579-80,³ a *History of the Duke of Millayn and the Marques of Mantua* was furnished with "a Countie howse a Cyttye;" a *History of Alucius*, with "a Cittie, a Battlement;" a *History of the Foure Sonnes of Fabyous*, with "a Citie, a Mounte;" a *History of Serpedon*,⁴ with "a greate Citie, a wood, a castell." Unless one supposes changes of setting, which would be difficult with such heavy properties, one must consider these plays as mediævally staged. But since they were presumably from the regular repertoire of the professional companies, these court presentations could not have differed greatly, especially in such fundamental matters, from the usual public performances of the same plays, and these records are, therefore, especially valuable not only as showing the existence in Elizabethan times of incongruous staging, but as leading to the inference of its existence on the popular stage of that time. *Thersites*⁵ also, Creizenach considers⁶ a play practically of the mediæval type. Here, then, is a direct line of English plays which were doubtless staged in the mediæval fashion, and which clearly bring the custom of the mediæval stage down to the time of Shakespeare.

Instead, therefore, of its seeming unreasonable and impossible to Englishmen to have incongruous properties on the stage, it was quite an accustomed thing, something they had long been used to. Preceding stage custom, the best possible justification and explanation of any dramatic convention, had sanctioned such staging practically since the origin of the drama. There were, moreover, numerous customs of the contemporary stage, partly

¹ *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 571.

² Cunningham, *Revels Accounts*, Vol. II, p. 13, Shak. Soc., 1842. I do not pretend to collect here from the accounts of the Revels all the information of value which they furnish concerning the properties and customs of the Elizabethan theater. That is a subject in itself deserving a separate discussion.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 153.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 155.

⁵ Ward, 1537; pr. 1567, or later.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, Vol. III, p. 540.

perhaps the result of this incongruous staging, but certainly similar to it in effect,—the creation of a symbolic rather than a picture stage, that is, a stage on which the properties are intended only to suggest the scene rather than to picture it completely, congruously, and realistically. Some of these customs have already been alluded to; for example, the unlocated scene.) In all the Elizabethan plays these scenes are common. They contain no hint as to the place of the supposed action; they could be imagined as occurring anywhere. Everyone admits their existence; it is therefore quite unnecessary to discuss them at length. It is necessary, however, to notice how consistent they were with the symbolic stage, but how inconsistent with our own. The old-time audience, its imagination left for the moment unemployed, did not attempt to give them any specific background, but accepted them for what they were—unlocated scenes—merely noting the progress of the plot. Modern editors feel called upon to give each its proper setting—a street, a court, a hall, a corridor—as the fancy strikes them. (On a stage where the stage picture is of dominating importance such scenes are impossible; on the symbolic stage they caused no difficulty whatever.)

Another custom, almost as commonly illustrated as that just spoken of, is the change of scene before the eyes of the audience. Generally without the stage being cleared of actors, the supposed place of action suddenly shifts to an entirely different place. Creizenach¹ notes illustrations of this in Zeigler's *Infanticidium*, III, 1, and in his *Nomothesia* (1574), where a three days' journey is indicated by walking about the stage. The English craft-plays also furnish examples; for instance, in the fourth play of the Towneley cycle the three days' journey of Abraham and Isaac to the mount of sacrifice is indicated in twenty-six lines (139-65). Among the illustrations in Shakespearean times are the following:

Romeo and Juliet (quarto 2, 1599; 4, undated; folio, 1623), I, 4, 5. Romeo and his friends are at first before the house of Capulet, but with the direction, "They march about the Stage, and Serving men come forth with their napkins," the scene changes to the interior of the house.

¹ *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 101.

Alphonsus (1599), I, 1102: The scene up to this point has been in the palace of Amurack. "Amuracke, rise in a rage from thy chaire" (1060). He banishes his wife, and as she is angrily leaving, Medea enters, and says: "Fausta, what meanes this sudden flight of yours? Why do you leave your husbands princely Court, And all alone passe through these thickest groues." The scene has changed before our eyes from the palace to a solitary place.

Dido (1594), I, 1, l. 120: The scene up to this point is not definitely located at all, but since it is between Jupiter, Venus, and Ganymede, one would naturally assume it to be upon Olympus. It certainly is not in the midst of a wood on the seashore near Carthage, where the action from that point on is situated.

Dido (1594), II, 1, l. 306: So far, the scene is in the hall of Dido. At this line it changes suddenly to a grove.

Antonio's Revenge (1602), II, 1 (in the Quarto this is divided into two scenes, but the stage is not cleared): Up to l. 17 the action plainly is in a church about the coffin of Andrugio; the latter part of the scene is before Mellida's chambers.

The illustrations so far advanced might perhaps be explained by supposing a curtain drawn at the point where the scene changes; but no such theory will make the following comply with modern ideas of dramatic congruity. In them the scene changes by the exeunt and immediate re-entry of the characters.

The Brazen Age (1613), p. 177: Hercules, having won Deyaneira, is going away with her when he meets Nissus, and then is stopped by a stream. Nissus exits to carry Deyaneira across the stream, which is thought of as off the stage. Hercules, rushing after him, shoots him with an arrow, and Nissus at once enters, pierced by the arrow, and we learn that the stage is now supposed to represent the other shore.

English Traveller (1633), IV, 3, p. 66: "Tables and Stooles set out; Lights: a Banquet, Wine." At the end of the banquet all the family retire to their chambers, but a guest, Geraldine, is left to rest on a pallet. He cannot sleep and decides to seek the room of his hostess. "He goes in at one doore, and comes out at another", (p. 69). The scene, in spite of the continued presence of the pallet, and perhaps of the table, is now plainly in the cor-

ridor before the bedroom. He listens at the door, hears voices within, and decides to leave the house.

Old Wives' Tale (1595): The play begins in a lonely place: travelers who have lost their way meet a smith returning home; they approach his house with him. He says: "Come, take heed for stumbling on the threshold. Open door, Madge, take in guests." She enters and says: "Come on, sit down;" and the scene is supposed now to be before the fire in the cottage. Probably they knocked at one door, were greeted by the wife, went in, and then re-entered at another door, so indicating the change of scene.

Iron Age (1632), p. 379: The Greek soldiers are besieging Troy. "Now with a soft march enter at this breach," they say. "They march softly in at one doore, and presently in [out] at another." After this direction the scene is near the wooden horse, which stands within the city.

Sometimes the scene is changed merely by the characters walking about the stage, as it probably was in the illustration just cited from *Romeo and Juliet*. *Faustus* (1604), sc. 11: Faustus having astonished the emperor by his powers, says he wishes to go home, and that he prefers to walk "in this fair and pleasant green," rather than ride. By the end of the scene he is at home, and sits down to sleep in his chair. The 1616 version has no such confusion of place.

George-a-Greene (1599), ll. 1037, 1038. The shoemaker seated at his work sees Jenkins and picks a fight with him which is to occur at the town's end. "Come, sir, wil you go to the townes end now sir?" "I sir, come." In this interval they are supposed to go. The line continues: "Now we are at the townes end, what say you now?"

If You Know Not Me You Know Nobody (1605), p. 244: The scene opens with a great procession. "Queen takes state"—that is, she ascends her throne; after which she pardons her enemies and oppressors. When this is over, Elizabeth says: "And now to London, lords, lead on the way." "Sennet about the Stage in order," is the following direction. Then the mayor of London meets them, saying, "'I from this citie London," bring gifts.'

Sir John Oldcastle (1600), ll. 491-701: At the beginning the scene is before Lord Cobham's house (499); by 600 it is before an inn, and by 680, where the Aleman says, "You draw not in my house," it is within the inn, all without any clearing of the stage. In 902-1162 a journey to Lord Cobham's is similarly made. At 1008 the house is supposed to come in sight; at 1132 the action is before it.

Arden of Feversham (1592), III, 6: Arden is on his way to Raynum Downs. His servant's horse is lame, and the servant leaves Arden, being told to overtake him before reaching the downs. Lines 61-94 indicate the rest of the journey before the downs are reached.

Captain Thomas Stukeley (1605), ll. 120-335: An old man is going to Tom's chamber. He walks from an inn to the house of Stukeley, the scene being supposed to change finally to the chamber itself.

Sometimes, instead of the scene's shifting, the stage at the same moment represented two widely separated places. Creizenach, in discussing another point of mediæval staging,¹ gives the following which is applicable here: "Noch 1609, in der Widmung vor seinem *Paulus Naufragus* rühmt sich Balthasar Crusius, er stelle nicht verschiedene Orte zugleich dar und dehne das Theater nicht aus wie eine Landkarte."² This parting of the stage into different continents, this labeling of the doors, what is it but a modernization of the mediæval staging? Sidney's 'Asia of one side and Africa of the other,' Mayne's "the stage was still a stage, two entrances Were not two parts o' the world disjoin'd by seas," already quoted, show that the same thing was true in England. A typical illustration of this from the plays of Shakespeare is to be found in *Richard III* (1597), V, 3, where the tents of the two rival generals are represented upon the stage at once, and therefore of course much closer together than they could naturally have been.

A slightly different example occurs in *Travels of the Three English Brothers* (1607, Queen's), p. 90. "Enter three seuerall waies the three Brothers; Robert with the state of Persia as

¹ *Op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 102.

² See also *ibid.*, Vol. II, pp. 101, 102.

before, Sir Anthonie with the King of Spaine and others, where hee receiues the Order of Saint Iago, and other Officers; Sir Thomas, in England, with his Father and others. Fame giues to each a prospectiue glasse, they seme to see one another and offer to embrace, at which Fame parts them, and so: Exeunt." Fame goes on to explain that each is in the country in which he was just represented, and the play closes.

A very similar scene occurs in *Eastward Ho* (1605), IV, 1. The scene is laid near the Thames at Cuckold's Haven. "Enter Slitgut with a pair of ox-horns, discovering Cuckold's Haven above"—probably a scene-board to that effect. He mounts a tree to leave upon it, according to custom, his master's tribute of the ox-horns, and from that height—either of a tree upon the stage or of the balcony—comments on what he sees. "And now let me discover from this lofty prospect," he says, "what pranks the rude Thames plays in her desperate lunacy." He sees a boat cast away and one of her passengers swimming; "his next land is even just below me." At these words Security enters and Slitgut greets him. Security exits and Slitgut again looks about him. He sees a woman swimming to shore at St. Katharine's and immediately the woman and a waiter in a tavern at St. Katharine's come on the stage below him and, acting their parts, are supposed to exit into the tavern there; Slitgut sees Quicksilver land at Wapping, and Quicksilver appears on the lower stage in a short soliloquy; then a party appears on the stage as at the Isle of Dogs; they meet Quicksilver, who a moment before was at Wapping, and a little later Security, who landed at Cuckold's Haven, enters to knock at the tavern in St. Katharine's. Finally, when all on the lower stage have gone, Slitgut descends with the words: "Now will I descend my honorable prospect; the farthest seeing sea-mark of the world; no marvel then, if I could see two miles about me." The tree or balcony was throughout the scene supposed to represent Cuckold's Haven, but the lower stage at the same time was Cuckold's Haven, St. Katharine's, Wapping, the Isle of Dogs, St. Katharine's, and then Cuckold's Haven again.

These examples of change of scene and of absolute simultane-

ity of scene show how greatly the Elizabethan stage differed from our own in its very conception and principle. It is plainly enough not a picture stage, but almost exactly analogous to the old stage of mediæval days. So far nothing corresponding to the "houses," etc., has been called attention to, but the juxtaposition of places far apart is plainly of frequent occurrence. The stage represents now this place, now that, without any division of scenes; or, even more boldly, this place *and* that at the same moment. Actors remain upon the stage, while it, like the magic carpet, shifts them about wherever the dramatist wishes. We are accustomed still to the convention of dramatic time by which we allow two hours to pass in ten minutes; or, in the act intervals, twenty years in a quarter of an hour. We have lost the very similar convention of dramatic distance, if one may coin a new term, which, no more illogically nor unreasonably, allowed two feet to represent as many miles, and annihilated space as the other does time.

The plays, however, do show exact parallels to the incongruous "houses." Percy's play, *Cuckqueens' and Cuckolds' Errands* (MSS dated 1601),¹ does not differ in principle from the plays of the Middle Ages. Instead of hell, Galilee, Nazareth, Jerusalem, represented by some sort of structure, Harwich, Maldon, Colchester are represented by labels displayed *simultaneously* upon the stage. When the scene was at Maldon, for example, the sign of Harwich was as incongruous and realistically improbable as the presence of Nazareth and Jerusalem on the same stage. All plays with scene-boards which represented different places must have offered similar illustrations. The only reason why the *Fuery Pastoral* (MSS dated 1603) and *Aphrodisial* (MSS dated 1602) do not clearly indicate this same thing is because their scenes are laid in imaginary places where distance is unknown. The quotations from Sidney and Mayne must be a third time referred to, to remind the reader how long the custom of scene-boards continued; it will be noticed that it is not against the scene-boards themselves, but against this very matter of unreality, that both critics were contending.

¹ See the directions quoted in Part I of this study.

It may be objected that scene-boards are not real properties and do not correspond to the old "houses." One can allow incongruous signs more readily than incongruous settings. But the *Errands* with its ladder and its Image of Tarlton, and the *Faery Pastoral* with its chapel, kiln, cot, oak, etc., certainly show incongruous properties which cannot be disputed, and which would have spoiled the complete realism of the stage picture, had any been attempted. The scene already referred to in the *English Traveler* (1633), IV, 3, was also incongruously staged; for though the scene had changed from a dining-room into a corridor, the pallet on which Geraldine had slept must still have remained in sight. So in the scene of *If You Know Not Me You Know Nobody*. While the procession passed about the stage symbolizing the journey to London, the throne Elizabeth had used still remained in its place. Practically all the examples of clashes noted in the preceding discussion of the alternation theory could be used as proofs of this incongruous staging. The weaker the argument to prove that the doors and balcony were outside the curtains, the stronger is the evidence for incongruity of staging. If the doors and balcony were all on the rear stage, so that it could not be concealed while they were in sight, the following scenes, already described, must, for example, have presented incongruity:

Antonio's Revenge (1602), II, 1: The hearse of Andrugio certainly remained on the stage till the end of the scene, and would be an incongruous property when in the midst of the scene the place of action changed to the space before Mellida's chamber.

Wounds of Civil War (1594), V, 2: If the balcony was not outside the curtain and there was no pause in the play, the throne used in sc. 3 must have been on throughout sc. 2, even though the throne was the seat of Sulla at Rome and the scene was happening before Preneste.

David and Bethsabe (1599), I, 2: If the curtain did not hide the balcony and there was no pause in the play, the "spring" in which Bethsabe bathed must have remained on in this scene, before the walls of Rabath.

Probably these scenes are best explained by supposing the

alcove stage. There are scenes, however, in the old plays which the alcove stage will not explain, and which no assumed confusion or omission of the text will account for—scenes in which it is clear that properties were on the stage during scenes to which they were not at all suitable.

Tamburlaine (1592), IV, 2: The scene is described as before Damascus: "Now may we see Damascus' lofty tower" (l. 102). Tamburlaine orders Bajazeth brought forth and makes him serve as his footstool: "Tamburlaine get up on him to his chair" (l. 30). Though the scene is clearly out of doors in the open country, an elevated regal chair is nevertheless introduced without comment or explanation. Similar scenes occur in *David and Bethsabe*, II, 4, and *Wonder of Women*, V, 2.

English Traveller (1633), IV, p. 79: The scene is outside a house. A number of gentlemen, in order to entrap Reignald, a servant who has been deceiving them, "withdraw behind the Arras," says the direction. Whether this arras were the curtain or not, whether it was open or drawn across the stage, it certainly was not a suitable furnishing for a street scene. Such incongruity must have existed in practically every scene where the stage was supposed to represent anything but a room, for the curtain in every out scene was ever present.

Titus Andronicus (1600), I, 1: We have become accustomed to this scene from its presence in Shakespeare; but what is the congruity of having a private tomb represented in the same scene as a meeting of the Senate? It only shows that, in the matter of dramatic convention, custom and not reason dominates. Whether we should so lightly pass over the incongruity of this scene if it were actually represented on our picture stage is doubtful.

Sapho and Phao (1584), IV, 3: Sapho, presumably in bed, and her maids tell each other their dreams. At the end Sapho orders them to "draw the curtaine." The maids are not directed to go out. Scene 4 is at the shop of Vulcan where he and his men make the arrows for Venus. There is no direct demand for a forge, but something, it seems, must have been used, since the making was plainly acted upon the stage. Bond supposes the

forge to have been behind the curtain; when the curtains were closed after sc. 2 the room furnishings may, it is true, have been removed, and the forge setting put in their place, the curtain being opened in sc. 4 when the making of the arrows began. Act V seems to continue without a break, however, Venus and Cupid continuing upon the stage. Venus says she "will tarrie for Cupid at the forge," while he goes to Sapho—a remark useless and meaningless unless the forge is on the stage and she actually does remain by it. Venus continues to wait for Cupid into sc. 2, which is in Sapho's chamber again, until finally, in the middle of the scene, she detects Cupid in Sapho's lap. Yet the forge has not been removed. The next and final scene of the comedy is before the cave of Sybilla. Clearly, if a forge existed—and if it did not, why the useless speech of Venus?—it was on the stage at the same time that the scene of action was in Sapho's court. If there is anything at all in the "clashes" of properties—that is, if the performance was continuous—and if anything represented the cave, it also must have been upon the stage during the same scene, and, since it is used frequently in the play, perhaps was on during the whole performance.

Parasitaster (1606), IV, 1: Bullen says the scene is within the palace. Gonzago enters in full state. But at l. 638 Dulcimet, his daughter, says: "Father, do you see that tree, that leans just on my chamber window?" Line 650, she says to him: "To Dulcimet's chamber-window A well-grown plane tree spreads his happy arms." Line 700, the Duke says to Tiberio: "This plane tree was not planted here To get into my daughter's chamber." This sounds very much as if an actual tree were intended, though it need not necessarily be on the stage. But the next act shows that it probably is. The action of V, 1, obviously in the same scene, is told sufficiently in the directions: "Whilst the Act is a-playing, Hercules and Tiberio enter; Tiberio climbs the tree, and is received above by Dulcimet, Philocalia, and a Priest: Hercules stays beneath;" (l. 128) "The Duke enters . . . and takes his state;" (l. 145) several people "lead Cupid to his state;" (l. 461) "Tiberio and Dulcimet above are discovered hand in hand." In short, a tree and a throne were both on the

stage at one time, the scene being supposed to be *at once* the inside and the outside of the palace; or, to state it more exactly, nowhere at all, because no scene, no background, was conceived of.

The Brazen Age (1613): This highly spectacular play, surprising as it is in its demands upon the staging, was performed upon a public stage, or, if not performed, written by Heywood, an experienced playwright, who would not absolutely violate theatrical custom.¹ The objection that the *Brazen Age* is too much like a masque to use it for evidence of popular methods does not apply either, for it was played, if played at all, in a popular playhouse and must have conformed to playhouse customs. There could have been little difference anyway between masques and popular plays in such fundamental dramatic conventions as these. If anything, the masques, appealing to the cultured and critical audience at the court, would have been the more realistic and the less likely to use this staging under discussion. Any illustration of it from the *Brazen Age* gets therefore added force from this consideration as well as the later date of the play.

Act 5, sc. 3, is as follows: Scene 2 was at Omphale's, where the Greek heroes have come to rouse Hercules from his effeminate captivity. He goes to make a vow at Jove's altar, Omphale remaining in soliloquy. Scene 3 begins with: "Enter to the sacrifice two Priests to the Altar, sixe Princes with sixe of his labours, in the midst Hercules bearing his two brazen pillars, six other Princes, with the other six labours, Hercules staies them." Lychas brings him, as in the familiar story, the poisoned shirt, and Hercules puts it on. "All the Princes kneel to the Altar." Hercules is seized with agony and goes out raging, the others except Lychas following him. Hercules returns directly to Lychas and kills him. The scene meanwhile must have shifted, for Omphale says:

¹ That these plays of the Ages were probably performed the following quotations show: In "To the Reader" of *The Golden Age*, Heywood says: "This is the *Golden Age*, the eldest brother of three Ages that have adventured the Stage, but the onely one yet that hath beene iudged to the Presse." *The Brazen Age* is in its address to the reader called "the third brother," but has no mention of acting. "To the Reader" of *The Iron Age*, after speaking of the *Gold, Silver, Brass, and Iron Ages*—the last in two parts—continues: "Lastly, I desire thee to take notice, that these were the Playes often (and not with the least applause) Publickely Acted by two Companies, vpon one Stage at once, and haue at sundry times thronged three severall Theaters, with numerous and mighty Auditories." Though "these plays" could refer to the two parts of *The Iron Age*, this is, as Ward says (Vol. II, p. 578), quite improbable. All four were probably given on the stage.

"Beneath this rocke where we haue often kist, I will lament." "Enter Hercules from a rocke aboue, tearing downe trees." Hercules kils Omphale with a peece of a rocke," and appeals to the Princes to help him in his agony. "All the Princes break downe the trees and make a fire, in which Hercules placeth himselfe." "He burnes his Club, and Lyons Skin." "Iupiter aboue strikes him with a thunder-bolt, his body sinkes and from the heauens discends a hand in a cloud, that from the place where Hercules was burnt, brings vp a starre and fixeth in the firmament." A report comes of Deyaneira's death and at the command of Jason to "take vp these monuments of his twelue labours", the princes exeunt, bearing off the pillars, which in spite of the change of scene from temple to open wilderness, have remained upon the stage. Even if this play were not performed, Heywood obviously writes it with the stage in mind: the conventions it illustrates are those of the stage, and one of those conventions is certainly that of incongruous properties.

These are not all the possible examples of scenes where a property is upon the stage during a scene to which it is unsuitable, but they are the best and clearest I have found. Other plays, however, illustrate the incongruous staging in another way. Suppose a play shows in several scenes scattered through it the use of the same property or setting, which is heavy or for some reason difficult to fix in place. Or suppose a property so used is small and unobtrusive. Is it not reasonable to suppose, in view of the fact that incongruous properties were allowed upon the stage, that these plays illustrate such a usage? Some examples have already been given: the tree in the *Parasitaster* used through acts IV and V; the cave, if one existed, in *Sapho and Phao*, referred to in II, 1, 2, 4; V, 3; the lodge, etc., of the *Faery Pastoral*; the ladder of the *Cuckqueens' and Cuckolds' Errands*; and the labels of the same play. *The Three Lords and Three Ladies of London* (1590) has hung up through most of the play the arms of the Three Lords, for they are all alluded to again and again (pp. 378, 403, 458, 473, for example). The scene does not change very much, almost approaching to a classical type of staging, but certainly does a little; and in these scenes the arms were incongruous.

The Case is Altered (acted 1599), III, 2, is another example of the small unobtrusive property. Jacques in this scene hides his gold in a hole in his yard and covers it with horse-dung. Scene 3 is at Ferneze's house; IV, 1, 2, are in the same; in sc. 3 Juniper is in his shop singing, presumably on the rear stage; but sc. 4 is the same as III, 2, with the pile of horse-dung undisturbed as Jacques left it. To imagine that it had remained there all the time is not difficult, and, in view of the other illustrations presented, perhaps it will not be too much to suppose that the tree into which Onion climbs had also been on the stage throughout the intervening scenes. Since the shop scenes almost certainly, and the house scenes, very probably, were on the rear stage, the tree and dung would be both on the front stage, and incongruous during those scenes.

Alphonsus (1599, but written 1589?): This play is an illustration of incongruous staging, if any property for woods existed. It is one of the plays which go far toward proving that such a property did exist, for it so uselessly, and yet so consistently, alludes to it. It is easy enough to see why a dramatist, when a plot imperatively demands a background of woods, might put in lines referring to them, even though no real setting was employed; but when the imagined situation does not require woods, or when it is actually out of keeping with the presence of woods, such textual allusions can be explained most naturally by supposing that some such setting actually existed, and that the textual allusions perhaps arise from its presence upon the stage.¹ Scene 1 is practically unlocated, but in it Venus, whom the stage directions bade to "stand aside," comes forth saying: "From thickest shrubs dame Venus did espie The mortall hatred which you ioyntly beare." (92, 93). In sc. 2 Carinus bids farewell to his son Alphonsus, and says: "Meantime Carinus in this sillie groue Will spend his daies with praiers and horizons" (179, 180).

In II, 1, Alphonsus overcomes Flaminus, the usurper of the

¹ The proof for wood settings, though not absolutely convincing, is stronger than that for almost any other property, the existence of which must be established from the plays alone. It is too long to be given here, but will be discussed in a later paper on Elizabethan properties. Brodmeier admits their existence (p. 65). If they existed, they took sometimes the form of separate trees, for in a large majority of cases a single tree is used as part of the wood scene.

throne, and bids one of the nobles bring back his army "Into this wood" (455). Though this is not the same wood as that in sc. 2, nor probably that in sc. 1, the setting seems the same. But in the midst of the scene is the direction, "Alphonsus sit in the Chaire;" and the place of action seems quite uncertain. Near the end of the scene Laelius leads in the soldiers spoken of before, and says to them: "Let vs lurke within the secret shade Which he [Alphonsus] himselfe appointed vnto vs" (699, 700).

Act III, sc. 1, is before Naples, but requires either chairs for three kings or one long seat. Sc. 2 is at the Turkish court, and since the scene is one of ceremony and Amurack is certainly sitting, it is possible that "chaire" means a throne. After the visitors are gone, Amurack—his wife Fausta and his daughter sitting at his feet—falls asleep, and Medea conjures up visions before him, Colchas rising up through a trapdoor "in a white Cirples [surplice] and a Cardinals Myter." The visions concern the fate of his daughter, and Amurack describes them in his sleep. They anger his wife, who wakes him. "Amuracke rise in a rage from thy chaire." He banishes her, but (the direction is addressed to Fausta) "Make as though you were agoing out, Medea meete her and say, 'Fausta, what meanes this sudden flight of yours? Why do you leaue your husbands princely Court, And all alone passe through these thickest groues.'" Fausta replies: "No toy . . . nor foolish fancie ledde me to these groues." The groves and chair were on the stage at the same time; probably the grove remained on through all the play, or at least to the end of this act.

Two Lamentable Tragedies (1601): This play tells in alternating scenes the story of two murders, one in London, the other in Italy. The London story uses two shops. If anything besides the doors represented the two shops—and it is necessary to see into both—it is not easy to imagine that the shops were taken off during each scene in Padua. Perhaps labels above the doors and signs were all the furnishings; but even then incongruity would result.

Alexander and Campaspe (1584): Bond¹ supposes the tub of

¹ Vol. II, p. 545.

Diogenes brought on and carried off each time, this being necessary sometimes in the midst of scenes. It is much simpler to imagine the tub on the stage all the time, and that it was supposed included in the scene of action only when alluded to.

Wonder of Women (1606, Blackfriars): This play has already been alluded to several times, once to prove that the doors were not concealed by the curtain. I believe that the evidence of the play shows this statement to be true; but if it does not, and if the doors did open on the rear stage, the result is to make the staging only more incongruous than ever. The principal illustration occurs in the third and fourth acts. Act III, sc. 1, is in the palace of Syphax at Citra. He is trying to compel Sophonisba to yield to him, and enters, dragging her in. She finally feigns consent, only stipulating that she be allowed to offer a private sacrifice. He gives the desired permission, but leaves behind him Vangue, his slave, to watch her, and bribes her maid Zanthia. "Enter under the conduct of Zanthia and Vangue the solemnity of a sacrifice; which being entered, whilst the attendants furnish the altar, Sophonisba sings a song." She sends away all but Vangue and Zanthia, and, making Vangue drunk, "They lay Vangue in Syphax' bed and draw the curtains." Then Sophonisba escapes through a vault which leads from the bedchamber to "a grove one league from Citra." Syphax enters immediately, and, "offering to leap into bed, he discovers Vangue," whom he kills, and then, sending Zanthia before him, he goes through the vault in pursuit of Sophonisba.

So far all is congruous enough. If the curtains referred to are those of the rear stage, the door presumably, the trap and the altar certainly, are on the front stage. If only bed curtains are intended, all, so far as yet appears, may be on the rear stage. Sc. 2, however, begins with the direction: "Enter Scipio and Laelius with the complements of Roman Generals before them. At the other door, Massinissa [the husband of Sophonisba] and Jugurth."¹ This mention of the doors shows that the doors cer-

¹It may be objected that all the rear-stage furnishings might have been removed while the curtains were closed, and the curtains again opened for sc. 2. But the succeeding scenes make this unlikely. Of course, if one wished to suppose even sc. 2 played with the bed, etc., in view, the doors may have opened upon the curtained space. This, however, would only add another example of incongruity—and throughout this argument I am endeavoring to accept every possible objection and to limit myself to unmistakable illustrations.

tainly were outside the curtains, but does not make clear whether altar and trap were or not. The scene is unlocated, and is only eighty-five lines long.

Act IV opens at the other end of the secret passage. "Enter Sophonisba and Zanthia, as out of a cave's mouth." From the textual allusions this is clearly in a forest. One may doubt, however, that any wood-setting was used, since this is the only scene in the play requiring it. Yet if the theater had such a setting for other plays, perhaps it was used here also. Syphax enters soon after Sophonisba, and, once more failing in winning her, sends her away. Then he summons up a witch, Erictho, who promises to put Sophonisba in his power by means of charms. When he sees Sophonisba approaching his bed, he is to say nothing and have no light by. While Erictho is off the stage working her charms there is much music, among other directions indicating this being: "A treble viol, a base lute, etc., play softly within the canopy" (l. 201); then "Enter Erictho in the shape of Sophonisba, her face veiled, and hasteth to the bed of Syphax." After a short speech, "Syphax hasteneth within the canopy, as to Sophonisba's bed," and the act closes.

Here three things are noticeable: first, the change of scene without clearing the stage, with the sudden reference to a bed in the midst of a wood scene; second, the use of the term "canopy" as if the bed were concealed behind it; and, third, the position of the trap outside the canopy. The "canopy"¹ seems equivalent to the curtains of the rear stage. Yet the use of incongruous properties here is not as yet illustrated, unless one assume a wood-setting on the front stage, for the bed was concealed by the curtain, and the curtain, so commonly incongruous in out scenes, may for the moment be disregarded.

Act V continues the action from the point where Act IV left off. The direction reads: "Syphax draws the curtain," certainly from within, "and discovers Erictho lying with him"—perhaps this is the bed curtain. "They leap out of bed." "Erictho slips into the ground as Syphax offers his sword to her." Syphax

¹ This term seems used with a similar meaning in other plays; e. g., Percy's *Faery Pastoral*, "Lowest of all over the Canopie ΝΑΗΑΙΤΒΟΔΑΙΟΝ or Faery Chappell. In V, 5, characters went into this chapel and "seated themselves both."

kneels at the altar cursing when "Out of the altar the ghost of Asdrubal ariseth."

The altar was near the trap, probably in front of it, so the ghost could seem to rise from the altar; the trap was outside the canopy, as we saw in the preceding act; therefore the altar was also outside the canopy or rear-stage curtain. It would hardly have been removed from there during Act IV, and, if not, would in that scene have been an incongruous property. Why should it have been removed? This incongruity would not have disturbed anybody, for in V, 2, where the scene is a battlefield, there is a textual allusion, "Seize that hill," and the following directions; "Scipio leads his train up to the mount;" "Scipio passeth to his throne." A battlefield with a throne is no more incongruous than a wood with an altar.

The Old Wives' Tale (1595, Queen's): The stage in this play was either the alcove stage, with the alcove arranged as a study, or a stage of one of the other types, with a door or a structure for the study. The study was probably concealed by a curtain (p. 343, where Delia is discovered sitting asleep). In front of this curtain, but, if one chooses, behind the regular stage curtain, stood a large cross and a well (some arrangement of the trap), in no way associated in the play, and perhaps not on the stage at the same time; there was also, near the study or cell, a turf which concealed a glass holding a light. There were on the stage, probably all of the time, a table, chairs or seats of some kind, and perhaps a wood-setting. That the study, the cross and the turf, and the study, the well and the turf, were on the stage together, though the study and the well, and the study and the cross, are not supposed to be related at all, is shown by the following scheme of properties:

Pp. 309-13, cross; 314, interlude by harvest men; 314-18, cross; 318-22, study, turf, and light, probably a table; 322-26, cross; 327, song by harvest men; 327-31, before the cell or study; the turf and light; 331-36, well, before the study; 336-39, table; 339-41, the well; 341-47, before the study, the turf and light, the trap.

How were these plays staged? The simplest and most reasonable answer seems to me to be that at the beginning of the play

all the heavy, naturally immovable properties to be used throughout the performance were in place, either on the front or rear stage, whichever one thinks more probable; or, better, with some on the front stage and others behind the curtains. In the *Old Wives' Tale* perhaps the well-setting was not put on until p. 327 during the song, since it was not necessary until after that point. Plays in which any property was used but once probably had it placed behind the curtain, where it could be quickly and easily arranged, discovered, and removed to make way for the next. Properties like beds or banquets were, when circumstances forbade the use of the rear stage or its convenient arrangement, brought on and carried off at the point where the action demanded. But properties, either difficult to move, like the well in *Old Wives' Tale*, or so small as to be unobtrusive, like the turf and light, were, when once brought on, left upon the stage as long as they were to be used, even though some scenes intervened to which they were inappropriate. As each of them was to be noticed by the audience some allusion was made to it in the text or it was used in the action; otherwise it was not thought present any more than the Elizabethan gallants seated around it.

It may be objected that this solution is not the only possible one, that there are very few illustrations cited, and that the whole is too unreasonable to be accepted. On the contrary, this incongruity is more reasonable than the logical and harmonious alternation staging. It would be strange indeed if the mediæval customs, which the studies of Creizenach, Chambers, and Jusserand show to have continued down to the time of Elizabeth, had suddenly been obliterated. It would be stranger still if, in the midst of such incongruities as the use of scene-boards and the change of scene within a scene, absolute congruity in regard to properties should have existed. Instead of the incongruous staging being unreasonable, it is, from the point of view of history, the most reasonable of all. It is not fair to attempt to force the plays into other forms. Of course, by assuming that, in the *Old Wives' Tale*, for example, the cross was removed at the end of each scene in which it was used, and replaced again at the beginning of the next scene in which it was required, the incon-

gruity can be explained away. But why should one do so? The scenes from *Tamburlaine*, *Titus Andronicus*, *The Parasitaster*, *The Brazen Age*, etc., cannot be so explained; *The Cuckqueens' and Cuckolds' Errands* cannot by any scheme be made other than incongruous; dramatic distance, and change of scene within scenes, surely existed. Merely because our notions of propriety do not allow such things now is no reason for denying them in the past. It is true that there are comparatively few examples; if there had been many, they would not so long have escaped observation. The large number of lost plays, moreover, especially of this earlier period, must not be forgotten. For one illustration still existing, there may originally have been a dozen. It is also necessary to notice that of existing plays only a very few are at all definite as to their staging, and that, the more circumstantial and precise the directions, the more the traces of incongruous staging. If the inconclusive plays had been published with complete and specific directions, the chances are that our list of examples would be doubled. I have used as my tests of incongruity the presence in the same scene of incongruous properties, and the recurrence in a play of a property not easily moved or too small to be much in the way. This is a severe test, a situation which few plots would be likely to bring about. There are probably other manifestations of mediæval custom on the Elizabethan stage which we know nothing of and which we have as yet no means of detecting. There are other plays, such as *Dido*, *Histrionastix*, *Love's Metamorphosis*, which I think furnish examples when tried even by these tests, but which are not certain enough to be cited as evidence. In view of these considerations, even the few illustrations assume an importance out of proportion to their number. The fact that the plays from which they are drawn vary widely in date, in author, and in place of production, renders them all the more valuable and makes the proof of the existence of an incongruous staging on the Elizabethan stage as sure as any proof on such a subject can be.

One may almost say, indeed, that it is the only theory of staging which could have been true of the Shakespearean theater. That theater could not, in the very nature of things, have had a

picture stage: the shifts of scene just alluded to forbade it; the spectators seated upon the stage forbade it; the ever-present curtain as a background for all front-stage scenes forbade it. If the dramatists had attempted to secure perfect realism, they would have been bound to stricter rules than the Greeks. The chorus was liberty itself as compared with these conditions; for the chorus could be of any city and of any time; the Elizabethan stage audience was always Elizabethan and the scene must always have been London. The very strictness of the bonds compelled them to be broken, and the stage for the playwright of Shakespeare's day was necessarily only a platform upon which his characters stood, while the scene was anywhere his fancy dictated or his plot required. The properties did not picture the background, they only suggested and symbolized it.

This conclusion explains several things in connection with the plays. The curtain, so necessary in the view of the alternationists, becomes of secondary importance, and one understands why there are so few directions for it. Possibly not many more rear-stage scenes occurred than the directions definitely indicate. One understands, too, why there are so few directions for the use of properties, though the textual demands are more numerous, and though we know that the stage was furnished with fair completeness. If they were put in place at the beginning of the play and remained throughout the performance, directions concerning them would be useless. For example, the table, which seems so often assumed as present, probably was present most of the time, standing out of the way in one corner when not in use, and, when desired, brought into the center of the stage. Perhaps, too, this custom explains the number of textual allusions to properties: these allusions were possibly inserted, not to take the place of properties, but to indicate which, at the moment, were to be noticed. This, however, could not have been very necessary. There is no reason for supposing that a large number of properties ever crowded the stage. *The Old Wives' Tale* and the *Faery Pastoral*—the first with its cross, well, study, and turf; the second with its kiln, cot, oak, and well—are certainly more crowded than most of the plays.

Certain opinions concerning the Elizabethan theaters are confirmed by this incongruous staging. One of these is not, however, that which pictures the Shakesperean audience as primitive and childlike in imagination. That they accepted such an unrealistic staging was a result, not of any peculiar quality of their minds, but of their education and previous dramatic experience. It does not show that they were lacking in a desire for realism in their stage productions. Hardly a page of the accounts of the office of the Revels, which arranged the court plays, but shows how strong this desire was. But the desire for realism seems to have been concerned more with the individual properties than with a realistic general setting. In every consideration of the Elizabethan theater the fact must be remembered that it was not an illusion, a picture stage, but that it was largely symbolic. From that point of view, its body of stage customs is complex, but reasonable; from any other, it is absurd and inexplicable.

The opinion, often expressed, that the poetry of this drama was largely owing to the conditions of its production is in a measure true. The stage was certainly fairly provided with furnishings, but creating little scenic allusion, could not adequately create "atmosphere," and it became the task of the poet to do the work of the scene-painter. Not so much by description of the actual imagined setting—that would only increase the incongruity—but by the general tone which the poetry gives, Shakespeare and almost all the early dramatists strove to illumine their symbolic stage.

As the symbolic stage increased the task of the dramatist by requiring that he supply the background which it could not, it at the same time gave him greater freedom. Many have called attention to the influence in this way of the triple stage; the incongruous staging certainly increased it also. Because of this freedom, the drama was able to deal with many subjects no longer considered possible to it. The constructive importance of acts and scenes seems almost to have been unobserved; almost every scene began with an entrance and ended, (not with a situation) (but with an exit,) binding the whole play into one connected story; while in many cases the plot was not dramatic, but

rather a history, a novel, or a romance told in dialogue. *Tamburlaine* is such a play; so are most of Shakespeare's historical plays. They begin at the beginning, and they tell the whole story with all its details. It is useless to attempt to fit them into the dramatic strait-jacket of exposition, climax, and resolution. What is obviously true of these plays is probably true of many others. One may be permitted to question whether it ever occurred to most of the dramatists that there was such a thing as dramatic construction in the sense in which we understand it; and to doubt if there is much advantage, except a possible pedagogic one, in striving to make their plays comply with this modern theory. Rather, theirs was a narrative art, and their subjects were often narrative subjects. They dealt with these subjects as a novelist does, giving the smaller points as well as the greater. Often the plays lack any dominating conflict, but are rather a series of dramatic situations clustered about some single figure. To say that this was all a result of the stage construction and stage customs would be extreme and untrue, but their influence must have been great. In its fulness of treatment of the story, in its narrative rather than its dramatic art, in its greater range of subject, the Elizabethan drama shows the influence of the Elizabethan stage.

Which of the four forms of staging—the simple method of the early days, the classical method of *Jocasta*, the alternation staging, or the incongruous—was most prevalent, is a question which must, in the very nature of things, remain open. The classical form could not have been very common, for the plays in their frequent changes of scene would not allow it. The others seem rather to have been used together than in any separate and carefully distinguished way. *The Old Wives' Tale*, for example, may have changed during the outer scenes the study of Sacrapant into a place where Delia is discovered asleep, so illustrating the alternation principle; but the previous presence of incongruous properties shows the staging of the play to have been symbolic also. (Absolute tests for both alternation and incongruity are lacking; it is therefore impossible to give any definite answer to the question opening the paragraph.) But if the question be

varied to ask what is the relative frequency of apparent confusion and consistency, some answer may be attempted. For as these changes of place within the scene, this dramatic distance, this incongruity of properties are all confusion from our point of view, so alternation is consistency and orderliness. This is, indeed, one of the arguments against it. What chance was there for orderliness or consistency, such as the alternation theory demands, on a stage where there was so much confusion and incoherence? The alternation theory really means an approach to the modern notion of an harmonious stage picture. There was no chance for the congruity it demands, unless one grant the existence of the alcove rear stage. In that case it is conceivable that the Elizabethan theater presented a stage at once modern and mediæval in its customs. By 1603 the mediæval customs were not gone out of use; the symbolic use of properties, incongruity, the convention of dramatic distance, still existed. But on the rear stage, if we are not compelled to suppose every scene using the door, the balcony, or properties, as behind the curtain, there may have been presented a congruous stage picture, especially if the rear stage were not too large to be furnished with fair completeness. Even in the *Wonder of Women*, for example, the rear stage could then in every important detail have represented a bedroom, and though the altar, the throne, even the trees perhaps, were all in plain sight on the front stage, in mediæval fashion, the rear stage would nevertheless be coherent and harmonious in itself.

If this was actually the case, and complete realism was once really introduced even in a few scenes, it is easy to see that the tendency would be to make all the play similarly realistic, and that the mediæval customs would gradually disappear. This would be true because the people were naturally fond of realism and delighted in it, and because men like Sidney and Jonson, accustomed to classical unity and propriety, were already objecting to the old incongruity.

But it seems to me impossible to trace, during the strict Elizabethan period at least, any marked decay of mediæval custom. The illustrations which I have cited date from the last

years of the period quite as often as from the earlier years. Only two cases showing elimination of incongruity are known to me, and they may be purely fortuitous.¹

Plays really illustrating these incongruities may, of course, from our imperfect means of detecting them, pass unnoticed, and other forms of incongruity may also have existed of which we know nothing. Perhaps a critical study of all the plays produced between 1559 and 1642 would show more clearly the way in which the mediæval customs were lost in the modern, but that is outside my present inquiry. All I am attempting to show is that in 1603 the English theater still exhibited in the apparent confusion of its staging traces of mediæval influence.

"Apparent" confusion, however, for the incongruous staging is incongruous only so long as we insist upon looking at it from a modern point of view. If we once fully admit that the Elizabethan stage was hardly more than a platform for acting and not a mimic world in itself, the performance of a play with "incongruous" staging becomes no more incongruous than is the performance of a modern public reader. Genée² and Kilian³ have both noted the symbolic nature of the Elizabethan front stage, but they have not noted, or have indeed denied these farther proofs of symbolism—the scene-boards, dramatic distance, incongruous properties, etc., the very customs which make the recognition of symbolism most necessary and most important. To insist upon the modern point of view as regards the staging of the old plays is, of course, to make them seem unreasonable and absurd. So long as editors continue to introduce into the old plays their own misleading divisions into scenes and their own

¹ *Faustus* (1604), sc. 11, shows a shift of scene which the 1616 version avoids. *James IV* (1598) has two sets of act interludes. One set (printed by Manly between each act) indicates exits at the end of each interlude, and the references to "our harbour" (351), "our sell" (369), suggests that Oberon and Bohun concealed themselves in the tomb mentioned in the Induction. This tomb would thus be an incongruous setting during the scenes of the play itself. The other set (printed by Manly, p. 351) allows the supposition that Oberon and Bohun remained in the balcony throughout the play observing the action, since there is no hint that the two went off at the end of each interlude. If the tomb were actually so used in the former set of interludes (and this is doubtful), and if the gallery were the place of observation in the other set (and this is doubtful, too), the second set would make unnecessary an incongruous property. In neither *Faustus* nor *James IV*, however, is it at all certain that the versions showing incongruity represent the earlier form of production.

² *Jahrbuch*, Vol. XXVI, pp. 139 ff.

³ *Ibid.*, Vol. XXXVI, p. 231.

meaningless location of scenes, so long will the plays seem chaotic and unintelligible. But as soon as they are considered from the point of view of the symbolic stage, there is hardly an extant play which does not in its staging become reasonable, coherent, and effective. The actual restoration of the Elizabethan stage is probably neither possible nor desirable; most modern audiences, seeing one of Shakespeare's plays presented as in his day, would in all probability be only confused and irritated. Perhaps the unset front stage may still prove advantageous in Shakespearean productions, but the old customs of scene-boards, sudden shifts of place within scenes, incongruous properties, etc., are probably lost forever. But, if lost to the stage, they are not necessarily lost to the closet, and as readers, if not as spectators, of the Elizabethan drama, we can still see it as it was and not as modern conditions make it appear to be.

I have in this discussion endeavored among minor matters to make clear the existence of scene-boards, the existence of three stage doors, and the probability of the existence of an alcove rear stage, though also insisting that no one form of stage was universal or exclusive. In more general topics I have attempted only to show that the advocates of alternation, in founding their speculations on too narrow a basis and on an as yet unproved, if not improbable, idea of stage-construction, are using tests contradictory to each other and sometimes certainly untrue; that, in consequence, the theory has been supposed to apply where it certainly does not, and its importance overemphasized; that Elizabethan stage custom, instead of being the simple, essentially modern thing the alternationists would make it, was a complex growth, uniting with some realistic methods elements of incongruity similar to, if not derived from, those of the mediæval stage; and that, if we would secure a proper idea of the Elizabethan drama, we must abandon our modern notions of stage propriety, and read the old plays from the point of view of the symbolic "incongruous" stage.

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